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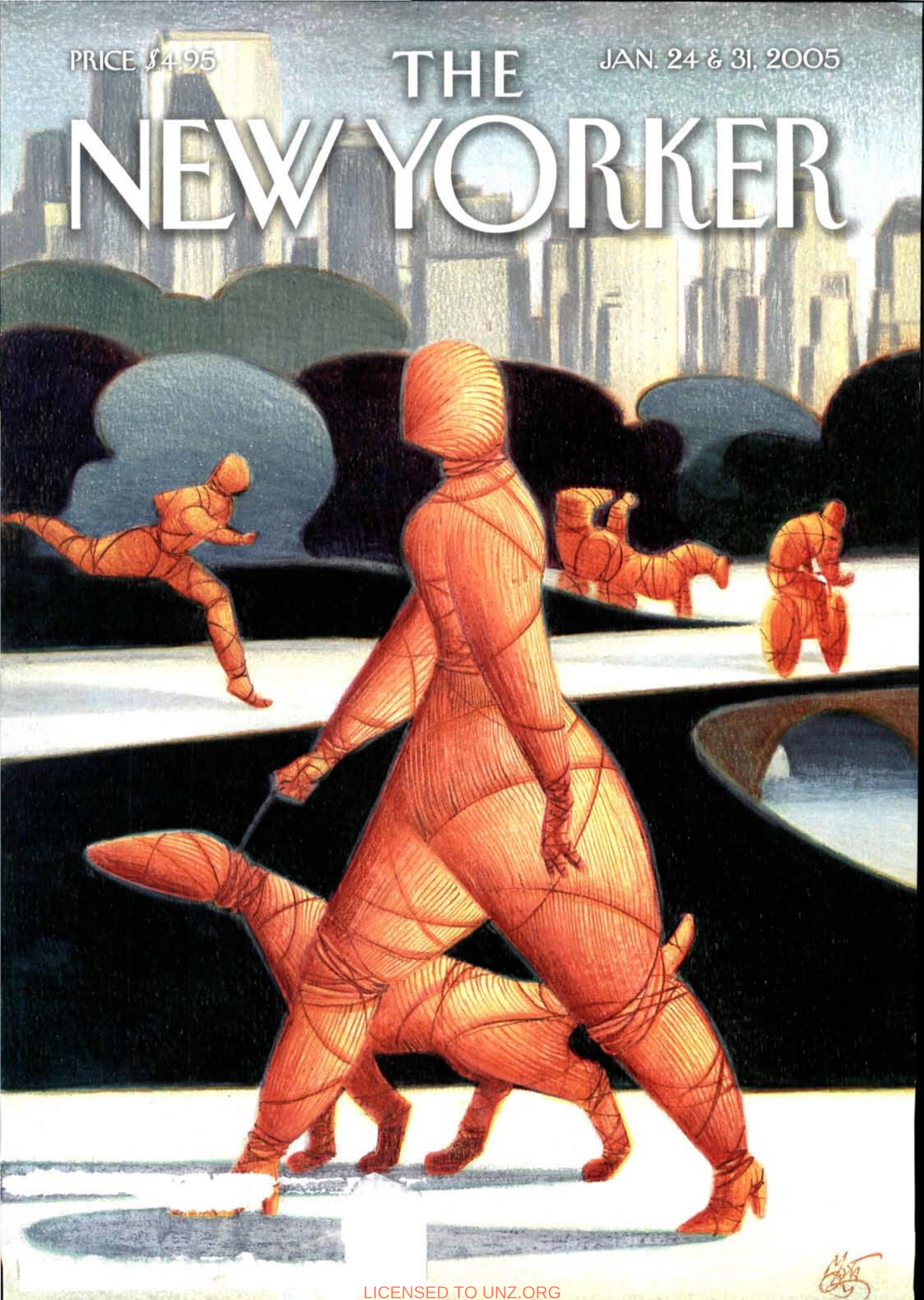
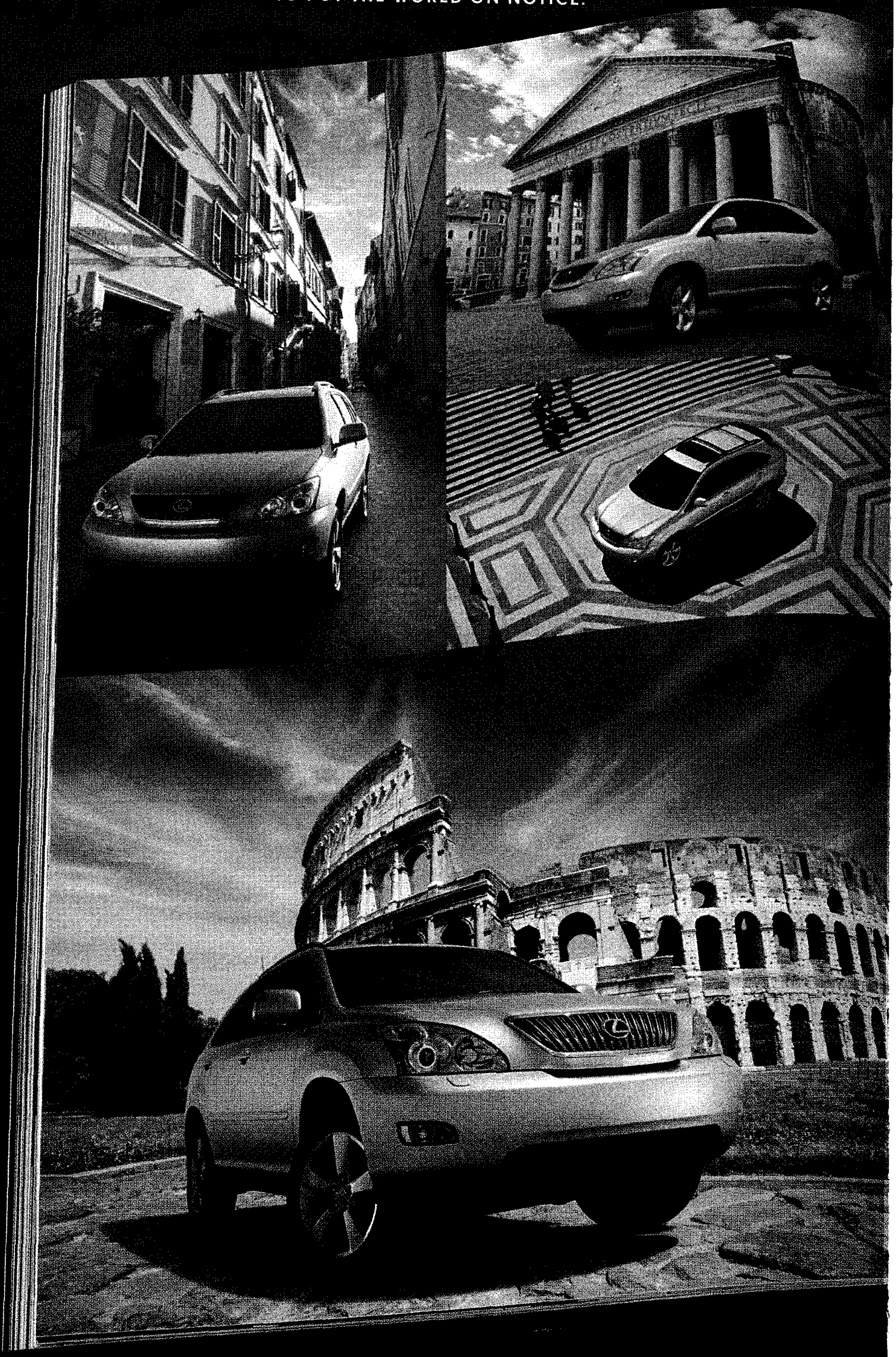
JAN. 24 & 31, 2005

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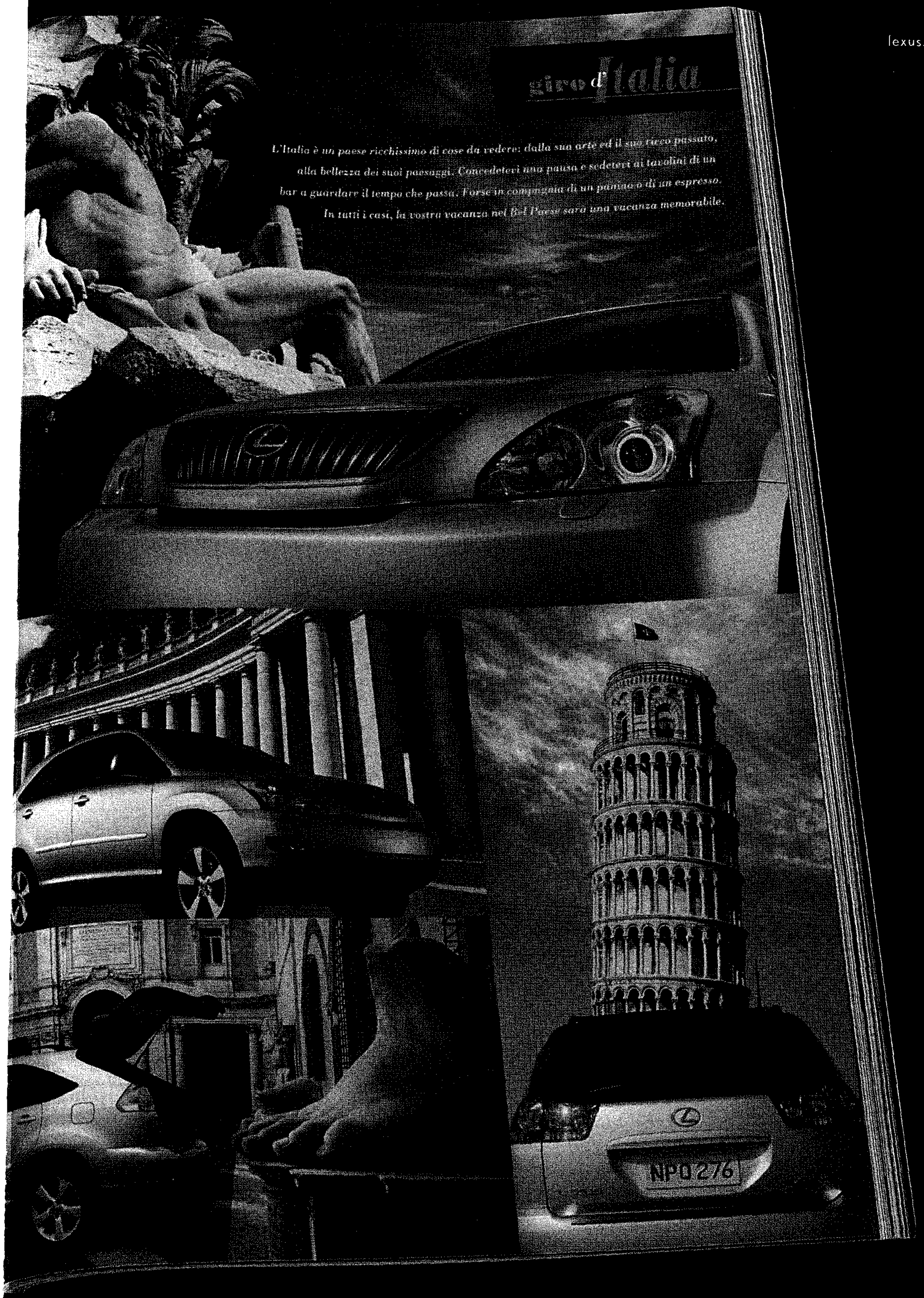

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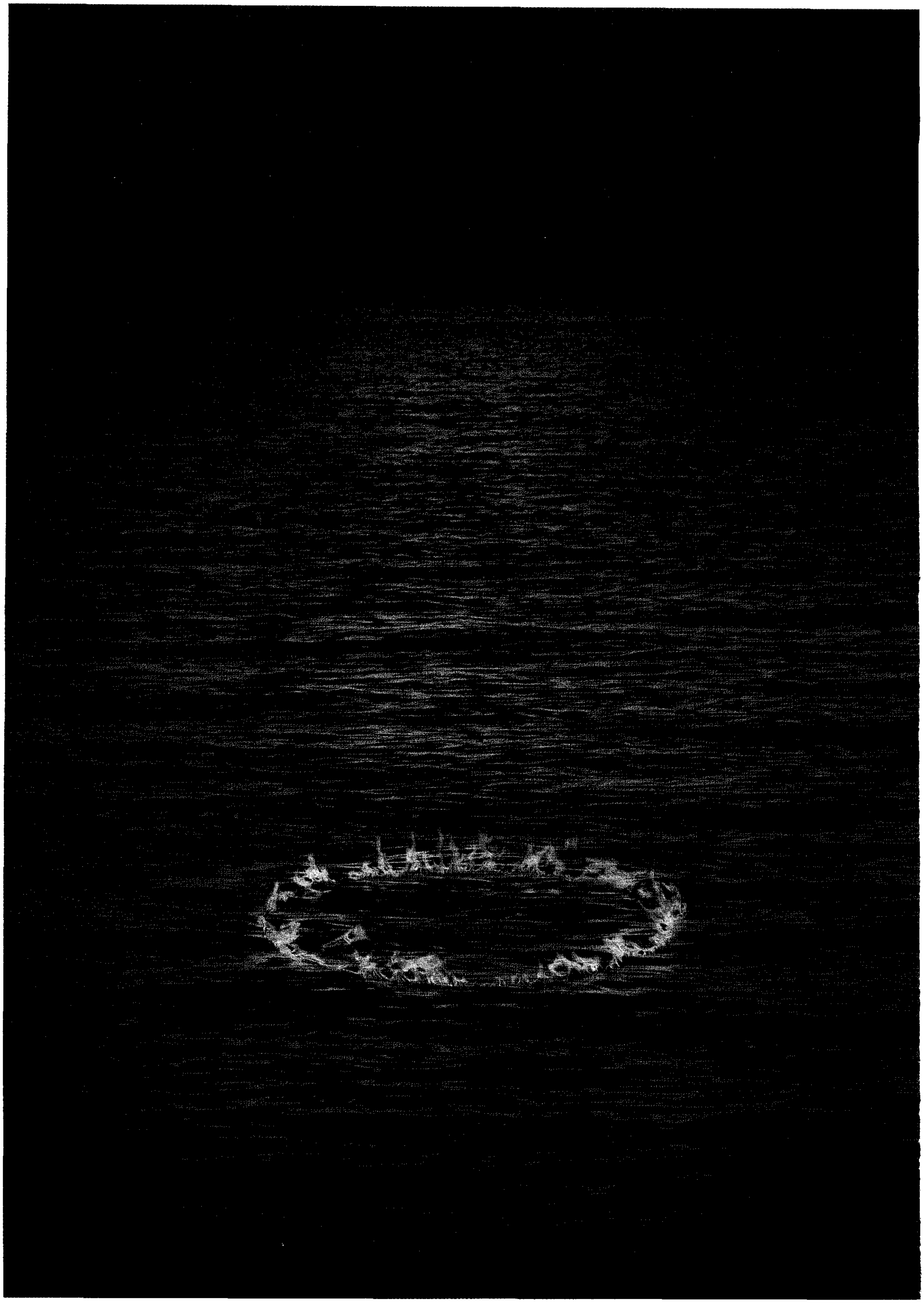

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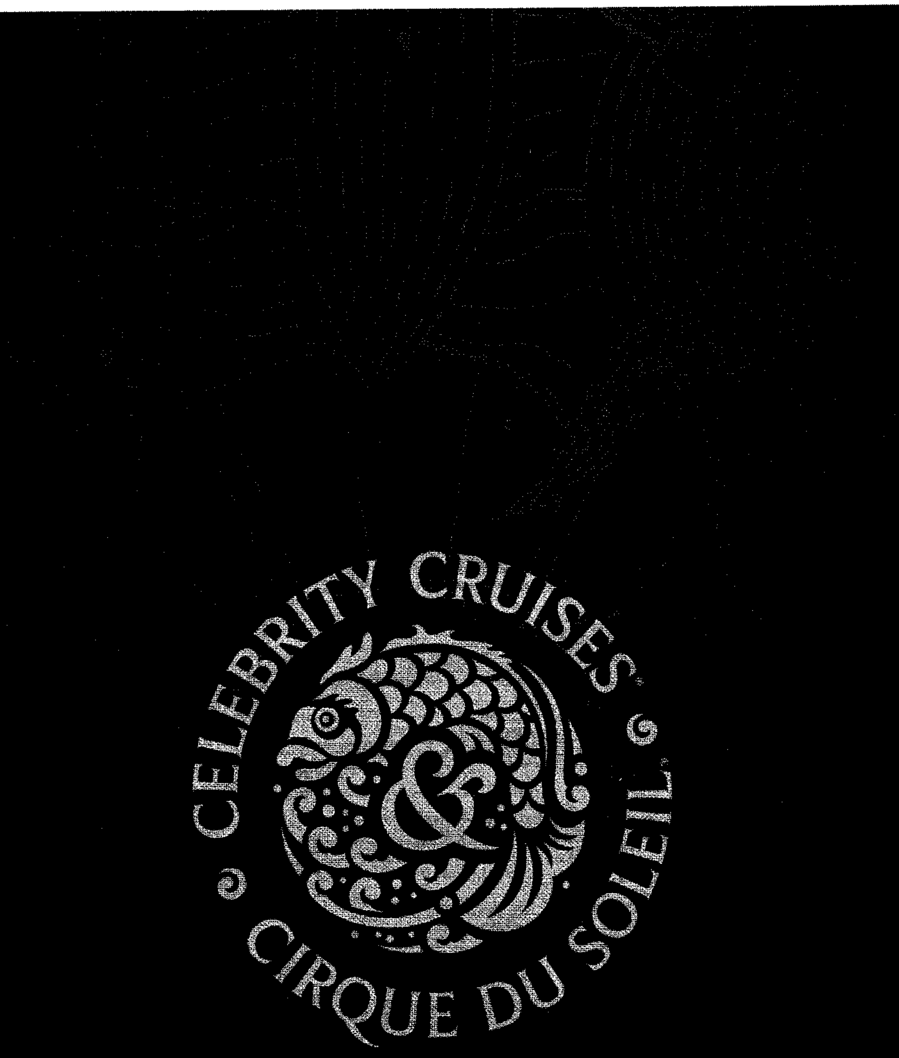
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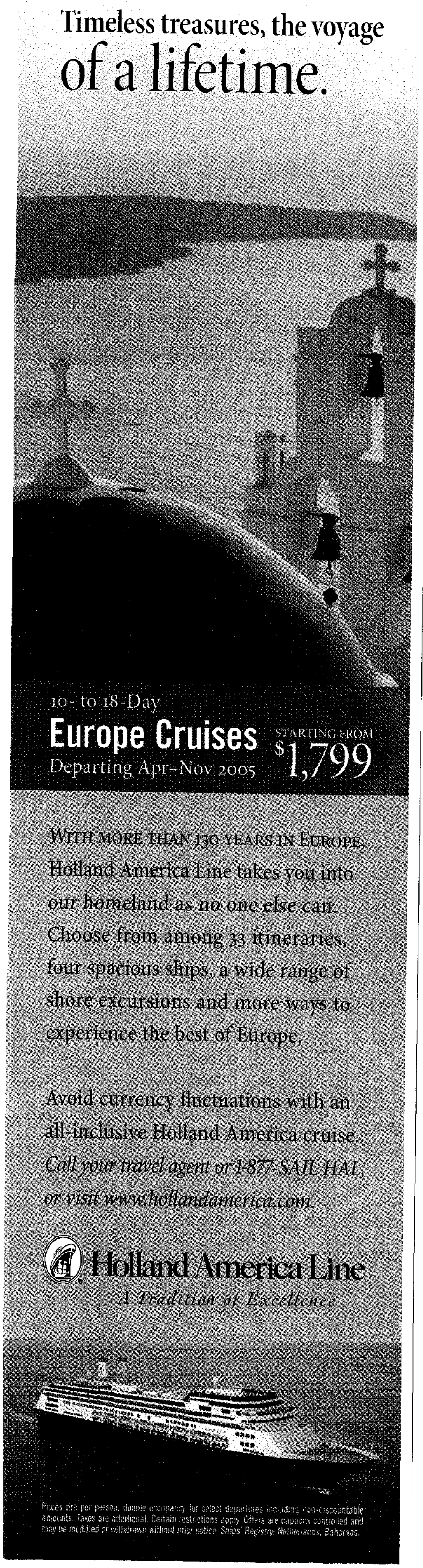

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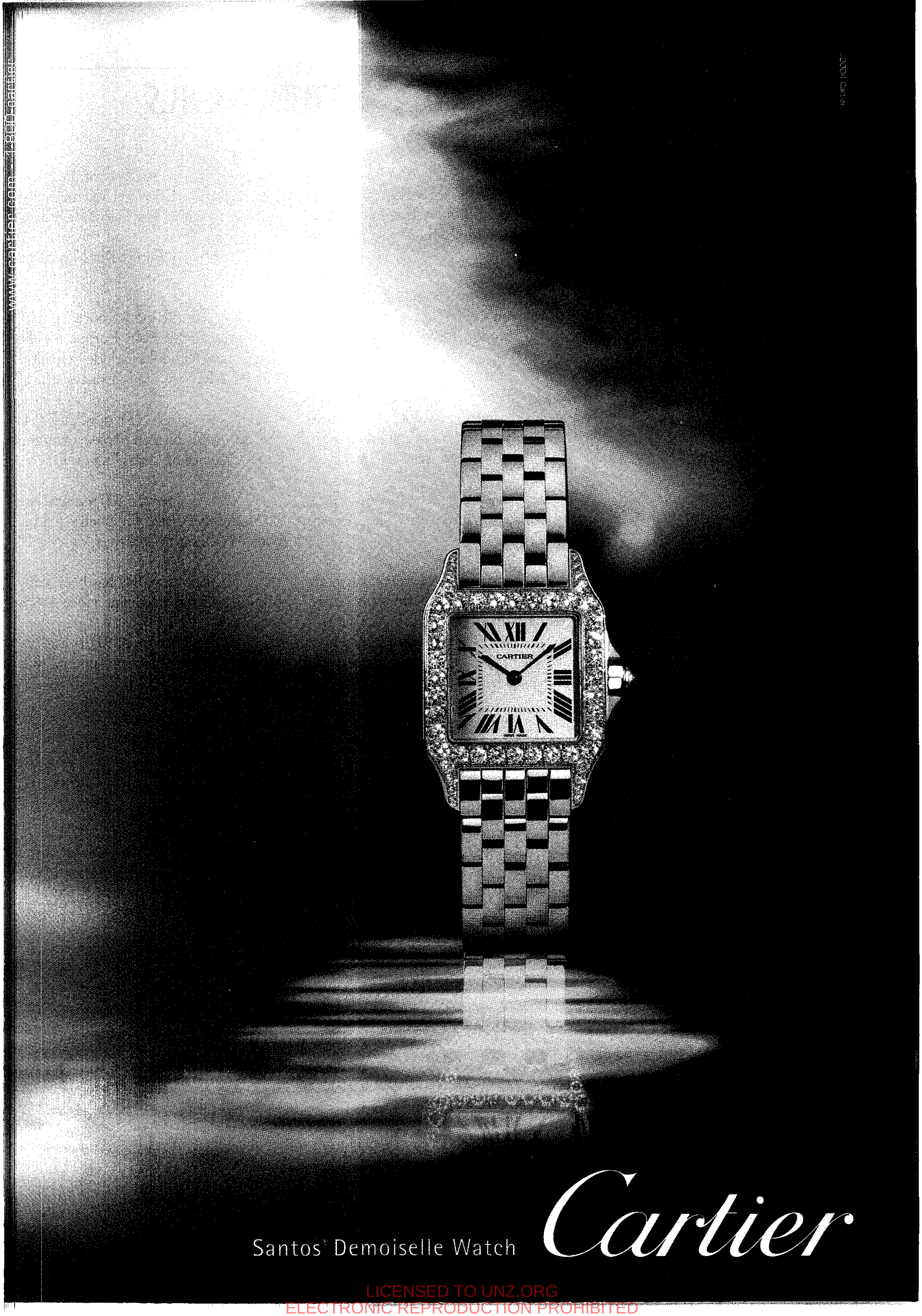
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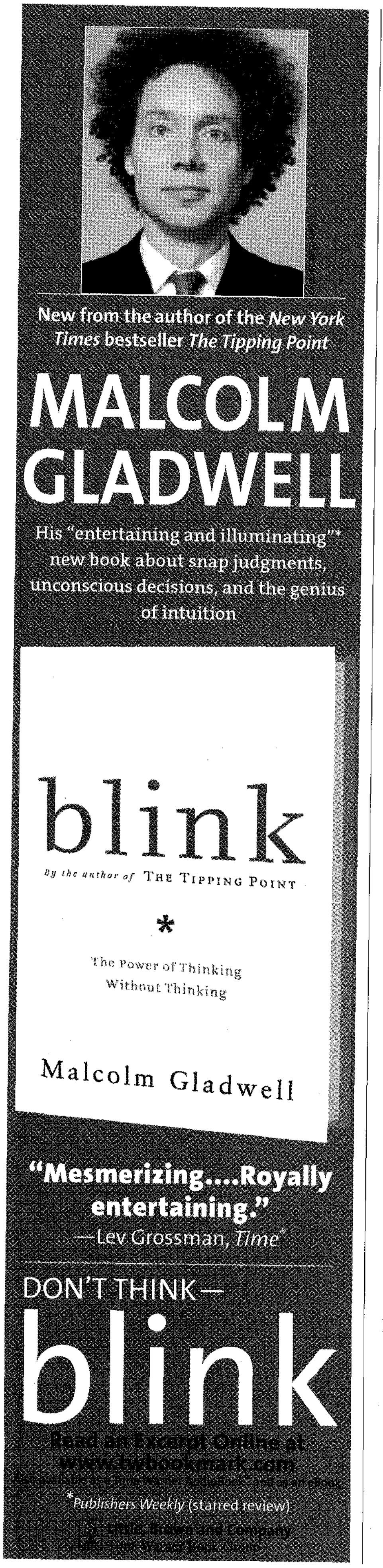
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CONTRIBUTORS

Seymour M. Hersh ("The Coming Wars," p. 40) is the author of "Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib," which was published in September.

Andy Borowitz (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 48) won a 2004 Dot-Comedy Award for his humor Web site, the Borowitz Report.

Eliza Griswold (The Talk of the Town, p. 36) received the Robert I. Friedman Award from the Fund for Investigative Journalism last summer.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 38) is the author of "The Wisdom of Crowds."

Lorenzo Mattotti (Cover) created the linking sequences for the film "Eros," which will be released in the U.S. in April, and will be working on a book of drawings of the upcoming carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

Jon Lee Anderson ("A Man of the Shadows," p. 56) is a staff writer and the author of, most recently, "The Fall of Baghdad."

Rebecca Mead ("Funny Boys," p. 50) is a staff writer.

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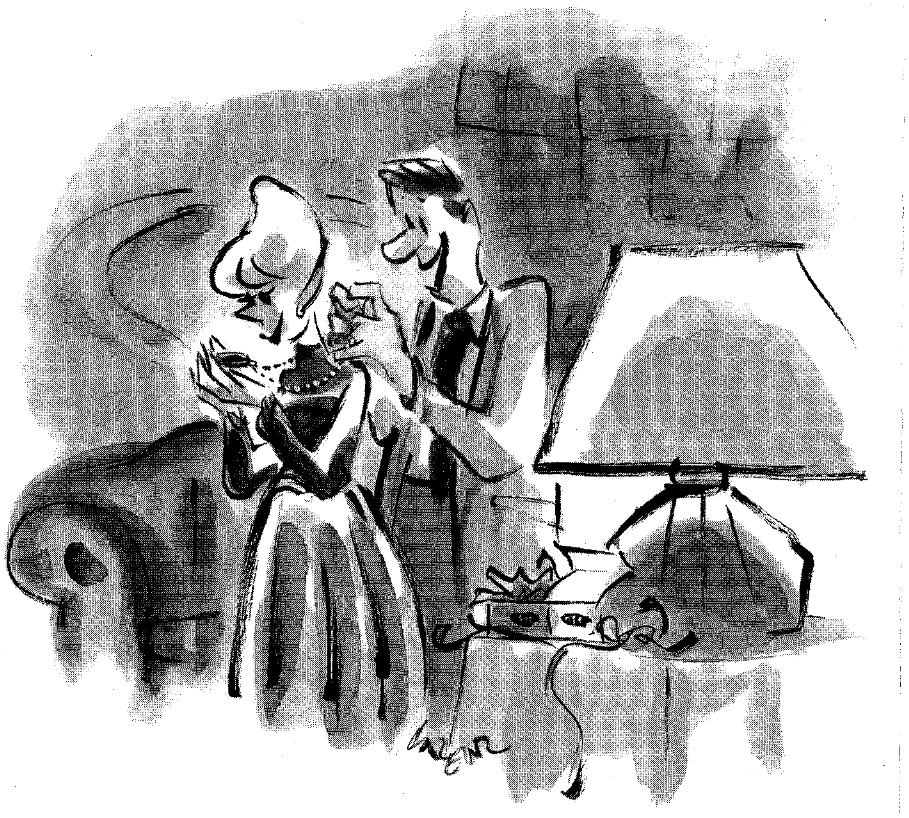
John Updike (Books, p. 91) is a regular contributor of fiction, poetry, and criticism. ♦



"The locket contains a strand of my DNA."

THE MAIL

CITIZEN NANNY

From Rebecca Mead's piece on Bernard Kerik, your readers might infer that there was some impropriety in my hiring my son's nanny, Jane Lucas (The Talk of the Town, January 10th). There was no such impropriety. From the moment I hired Ms. Lucas, in 1986, through today, it has been legal for her to work for me. She and I have made all the necessary government filings, on time, and have paid all the required taxes, on time, to insure that her employment complied with all laws and regulations, federal and state. When I hired Ms. Lucas, the I.N.S. began the process that resulted in her becoming a U.S. citizen.

Kimba M. Wood
New York City

RADICALLY DIFFERENT

I enjoyed Geraldine Brooks's appreciation of Bronson Alcott, but I was sorry that she dismissed Emerson's abolitionism as "just talk" ("Orpheus at the Plough," January 10th). As Len Gougeon has shown in his book "Virtue's Hero," the critical consensus about Emerson's relationship to the radicalism of his day has been such that, until recently, evidence of his serious commitment went largely unregarded. In fact, Emerson actively campaigned for the Free-Soil candidate John G. Palfrey in 1851; his home was a designated stop on the Underground Railroad from 1854 until emancipation; he entertained John Brown at his home and raised money for him; and he was friends with the "Secret Six" (who helped Brown plan the Harpers Ferry raid), even harboring one of them, Franklin Sanborn, as a fugitive in his home.

Michael Magee
Cumberland, R.I.

READ PERIL

The electoral crisis in Ukraine has raised a large, possibly fateful question: Are we on the eve of a new American-Russian cold war? George Packer provides evidence of that possibility by reverting to a familiar—and, one would have thought, long-discredited—kind of Cold War polemic (Comment, December 20th & 27th). Objecting to an article in *The Nation* by Jonathan Steele, a veteran reporter for the British *Guardian*, which pointed out that the United States (as well as Russia) had been long and deeply involved in the run-up to the Ukrainian election, Packer asserts that *The Nation* is "once again taking the Russian side of the Cold War." What is significant here is not the outright falsity of Packer's claim but his revival of the quintessential Cold War practice of slurring a political opponent as unpatriotic, even disloyal. If such a disgraceful habit can be revived in *The New Yorker*, then a new cold war is indeed under way—at least in the U.S.

Katrina vanden Heuvel
Editor, The Nation
New York City

George Packer replies: My comment about *The Nation* was not a slur but a historical observation. I was thinking of its editor Freda Kirchwey, for example, who travelled to Poland in 1948 and, while expressing concern over the loss of freedom in Czechoslovakia, praised the achievements of the hard-line Polish government; or *The Nation's* correspondent Alexander Werth, who, after Stalin's death, in 1953, eulogized the dead dictator as a tough-love father figure, concluding, "Emotionally, therefore, Stalin's disappearance is a grave blow to every Russian, even the malcontents, especially in the present international situation." In later years, *The Nation* gave abundant space to Alexander Cockburn, who downplayed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an example of "proletarian internationalism" and devoted a column to minimizing Stalin's murders.

•

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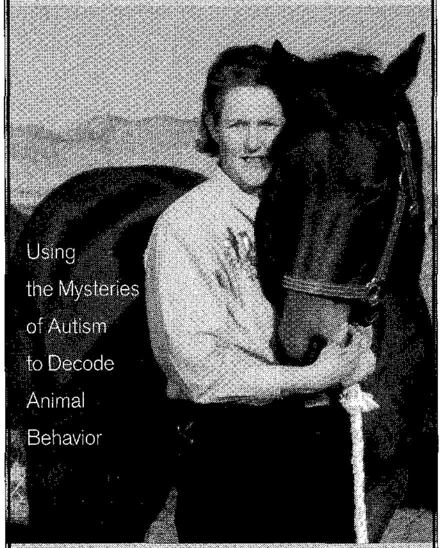

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK
THE SCORSESES, AT HOME

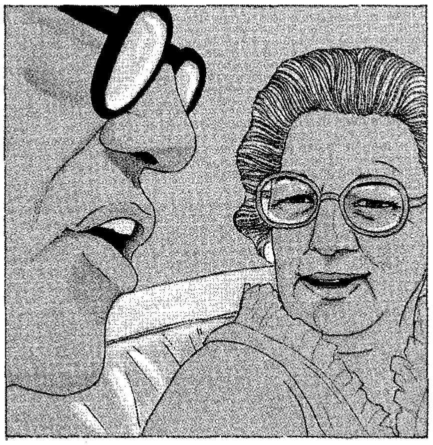
Martin Scorsese has called "ItalianAmerican," a meandering 1974 interview with his parents, the best film he ever made. It's certainly the most loving. The setting is the walkup apartment on Elizabeth Street where Catherine and Charles Scorsese lived. The two reflect on their long marriage and their accommodation to America, comparing home wine-making techniques and nagging Marty about visiting the dentist more often. Scorsese left the hyphen out of the title because his parents "are neither Italian nor American. They are one." (Film Forum, starts Jan. 21; see Movies.)

BLUE FRIDAY

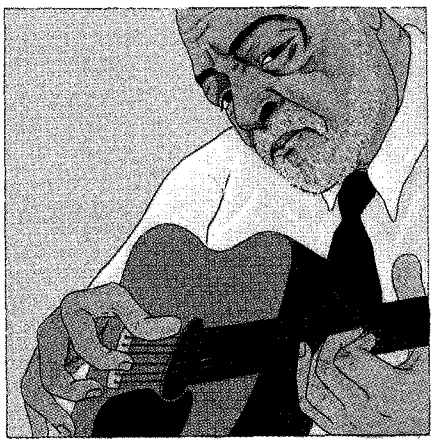
The "Legends of the Blues" headliners have more than three centuries of experience between them. The octogenarian guitarist Robert Lockwood, Jr., is Robert Johnson's stepson and learned how to play the guitar from Johnson himself. The Mississippi singer David (Honeyboy) Edwards also favors the acoustic Delta sound. They'll be joined by the Chicago guitar wizard Buddy Guy and the soulful vocalist Little Milton, as well as the bands that once backed Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. (Avery Fisher Hall, Jan. 28; see Night Life.)

SCHOLL ONSTAGE

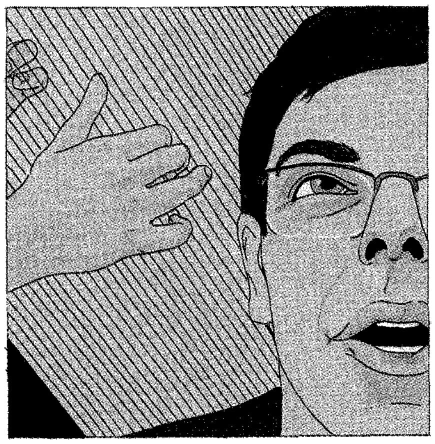
David Daniels reigns supreme as the Met's countertenor superstar, but for many connoisseurs the less florid and more masculine sound of Andreas Scholl has an equally persuasive appeal. He will get his chance to shine at Lincoln Center in "The Renaissance Muse," a music-theatre vehicle co-commissioned by London's Barbican Centre and fashioned by the director Mark Lamos; it brings English folk songs and art songs by Dowland and Campion together in a courtly narrative about the passions of the heart. (John Jay Theatre, Jan. 26 and Jan. 28-29; see Classical Music.)



Martin Scorsese's "ItalianAmerican," at Film Forum.



Robert Lockwood, Jr., in "Legends of the Blues," at Lincoln Center.



LARA TOMLIN

Andreas Scholl at John Jay Theatre, singing "The Renaissance Muse."

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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BELFAST BLUES
The actress Geraldine Hughes has turned her childhood memories of war-torn Belfast into an award-winning work in which she plays two dozen characters. One preview on Jan. 19. Opens Jan. 20 at 7:30. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

BROOKLYN BOY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Donald Margulies ("Dinner with Friends"), about a writer whose character is changed by success. Adam Arkin and Polly Draper lead the cast. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. In previews. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW
In Elmer Rice's 1931 legal drama, a not altogether scrupulous attorney struggles to avoid disbarment. The Peccadillo Theatre Company's revival last spring was well received and now returns for a six-week run Off Broadway, starring John Rubinstein. Directed by Dan Wackerman. Previews begin Jan. 25. Opens Jan. 30 at 2. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-868-4444.)

GOOD VIBRATIONS
More than thirty songs by Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys form the backdrop for this musical, about a group of East Coast teen-agers who head to California in search of surf and sun. Directed and choreographed by John Carrafa. In previews. Opens Jan. 27 at 6:45. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

HURLYBURLY
A revival of David Rabe's 1984 play, presented by the New Group, stars Ethan Hawke, Catherine Kellner, Parker Posey, and Wallace Shawn. Directed by Scott Elliott. In previews. Opens Jan. 27 at 6:30. (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LATE HENRY MOSS
Cyndy A. Marion continues her work with the plays of Sam Shepard, directing the White Horse Theatre Company's revival of Shepard's drama about two brothers who reunite at their father's deathbed—a subject suggested by the death of the playwright's father, in an alcohol-related incident in 1984. Opens Jan. 21 at 8. (Creative Place Theatre, 750 Eighth Ave. 212-868-4444.)

LITTLE WOMEN
Sutton Foster is Jo and Maureen McGovern is Marmee, in a new musical inspired by Louisa May Alcott's novel about four sisters of the Civil War era. Book by Alan Knee, lyrics by Mindi Dickstein, and music by Jason Howland. Directed by Susan H. Schulman. In previews. Opens Jan. 23 at 6. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

NITA AND ZITA
Lisa D'Amour's award-winning production about Flora and Piroska Gellert, Hungarian-born sisters who moved to this country in 1922 and became burlesque performers, plays for two weeks at HERE, where it had a sold-out one-weekend run in 2003. Jan. 27-Feb. 6. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

PYRETOWN
Carl Forsman directs the Keen Company production of a play by John Belluso about the struggles of a middle-aged single mother and a young man in a wheelchair. Previews begin Jan. 25. Opens Jan. 29 at 8. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

SABINA
Marin Ireland stars in a revival of Primary Stages' production of Willy Holtzman's play about Sabina Spielrein, a mentally ill woman who was treated by Jung (Victor Slezak) and later became a pioneering doctor, working with Jung and Freud (Peter Strauss). Directed by Ethan McSweeny. In previews. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

SHYLOCK
The Welsh playwright and actor Gareth Armstrong wrote and stars in this acclaimed play, which adds complexity to Shylock's character by enlarging the role of his friend Tubal (who has eight lines in "The Merchant of Venice"). With original music by Simon Slater. Directed by Frank Barrie. Previews begin Jan. 22. Opens Jan. 30 at 7. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

Keely Garfield in "Disturbulance," at Dance Theatre Workshop.

RACHEL DOMM

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
A new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin sets the travails of six young orthographic geniuses and their anxious adult entourages to music. Directed by James Lapine. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AS YOU LIKE IT
In his début appearance at BAM, Sir Peter Hall directs Theatre Royal Bath in a production of Shakespeare's comedy that stars his daughter Rebecca Hall as Rosalind. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through Jan. 30.)

BELIZE
A new play with music by the Talking Band, set in Belize and England in the eighteenth century. Written and directed by Paul Zimet. (Reviewed in this issue.) (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

COMMUNION
In this théâtre-vérité drama by the Irish playwright Aidan Mathew, set in the suburbs of Dublin, a young man (Ean Sheehy) lies in bed, dying of a brain tumor. His illness brings his family together for some fraught reconciliation and also draws in a troubled priest, who finds a remedy for his ailing faith in the sickroom. Directed by M. Burke Walker. (Phil Bosakowski Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-868-4444. Through Jan. 23.)

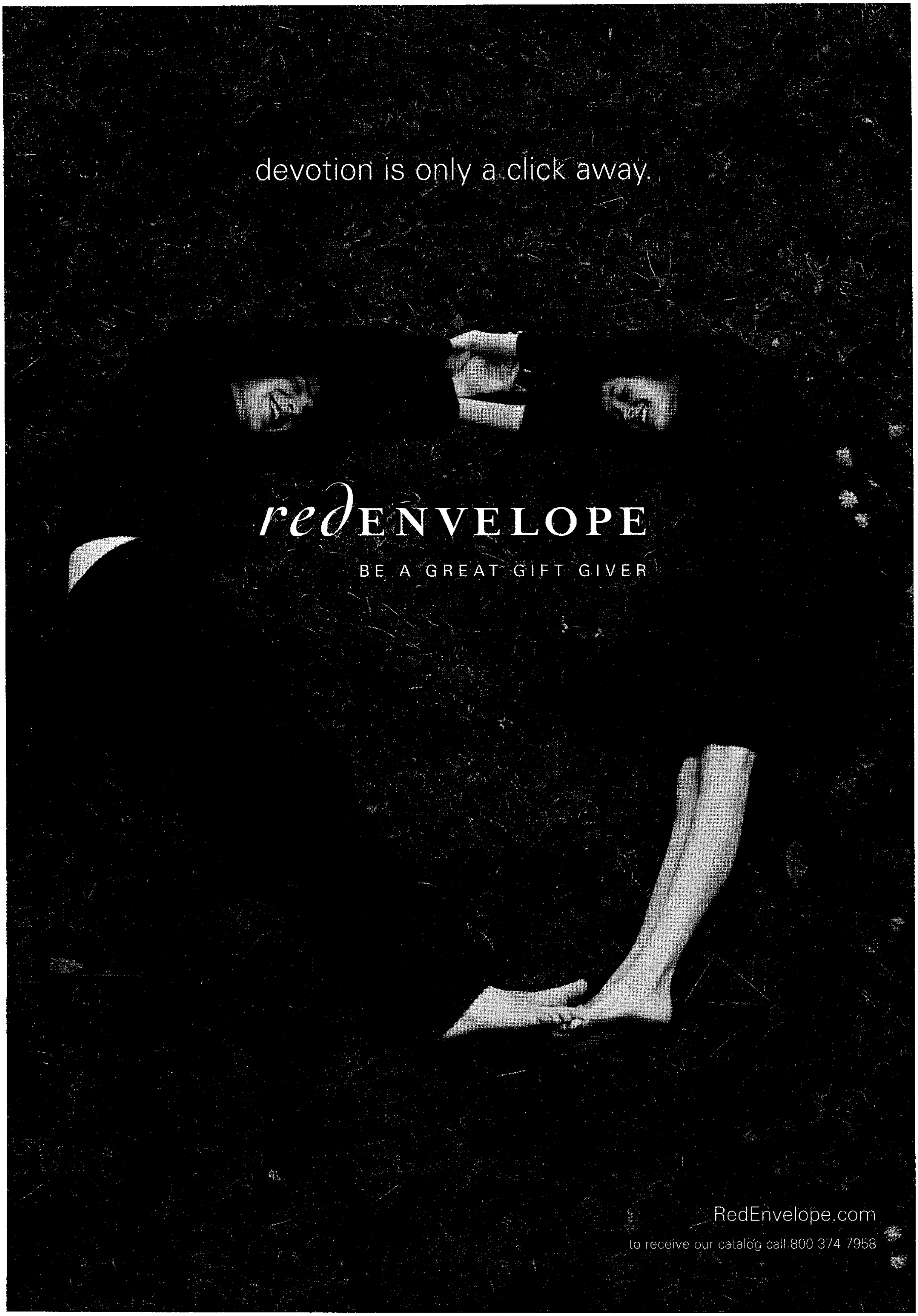
DOUBT
John Patrick Shanley's well-told tale about possible sexual abuse in a Catholic school pits a battle-axe mother superior against a popular priest. The cast is superb—the rebarbative Cherry Jones dukes it out with a charismatic Bríàn F. O'Byrne while Heather Goldenhersh tempers the simmering cauldron of ill will with her fetching sweetness. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/13/04.) (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Jan. 30.)

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
"Tradition" gets a wild new spin as Harvey Fierstein takes over the role of Tevye in David Leveaux's production of the classic musical. (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE GODS ARE POUNDING MY HEAD! (LUMBERJACK MESSIAHS)
Richard Foreman's current production stars Jay Smith as the lumberjack Dutch, T. Ryder Smith as Frenchie, and the eerie sylph Charlotta Mohlin as their surly muse, Maude. On a set dominated by a locomotive engine and a slide that looks like a log chute, the three of them explore the proposition that "when the big heart of the world breaks, then everything breaks." They are aided by six cartoony henchmen with five o'clock shadow who wear satin bloomers and black caps topped with jewelled crosses. (Note: All shows start promptly; latecomers will not be admitted.) (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.)

HAROLD & MAUDE: THE MUSICAL
The opening scene in Tom Jones's musical adaptation of the 1971 cult film (about a romance between a young man and an eighty-year-old woman) is marvellous. As Harold (Eric Millegan, looking like Ashton Kutcher in "That '70s Show") swings from a noose in a fake suicide, his self-involved, snooty mother (Donna English) ignores him and sings a neatly crafted song by Joe Thalken, "Self, Self, Self." Estelle Parsons is pitch perfect as the free-spirited Maude, Danny Burstein and Donna Lynne Champlin play a handful of character roles to comic effect, and Champlin delivers some grand numbers ("Montezuma" and "Woe," in particular). Still, the exposition feels rushed and confused, some gimmicks are regrettable (an Asian groundskeeper with an "R"s and "L"s "plobrem"; the scatological song "Flush It Out"), and the production as a whole lacks the subtle piquancy of the original. (Paper Mill Playhouse, Brookside Dr., Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA
The Pearl Theatre Company presents Federico García Lorca's drama about a widow whose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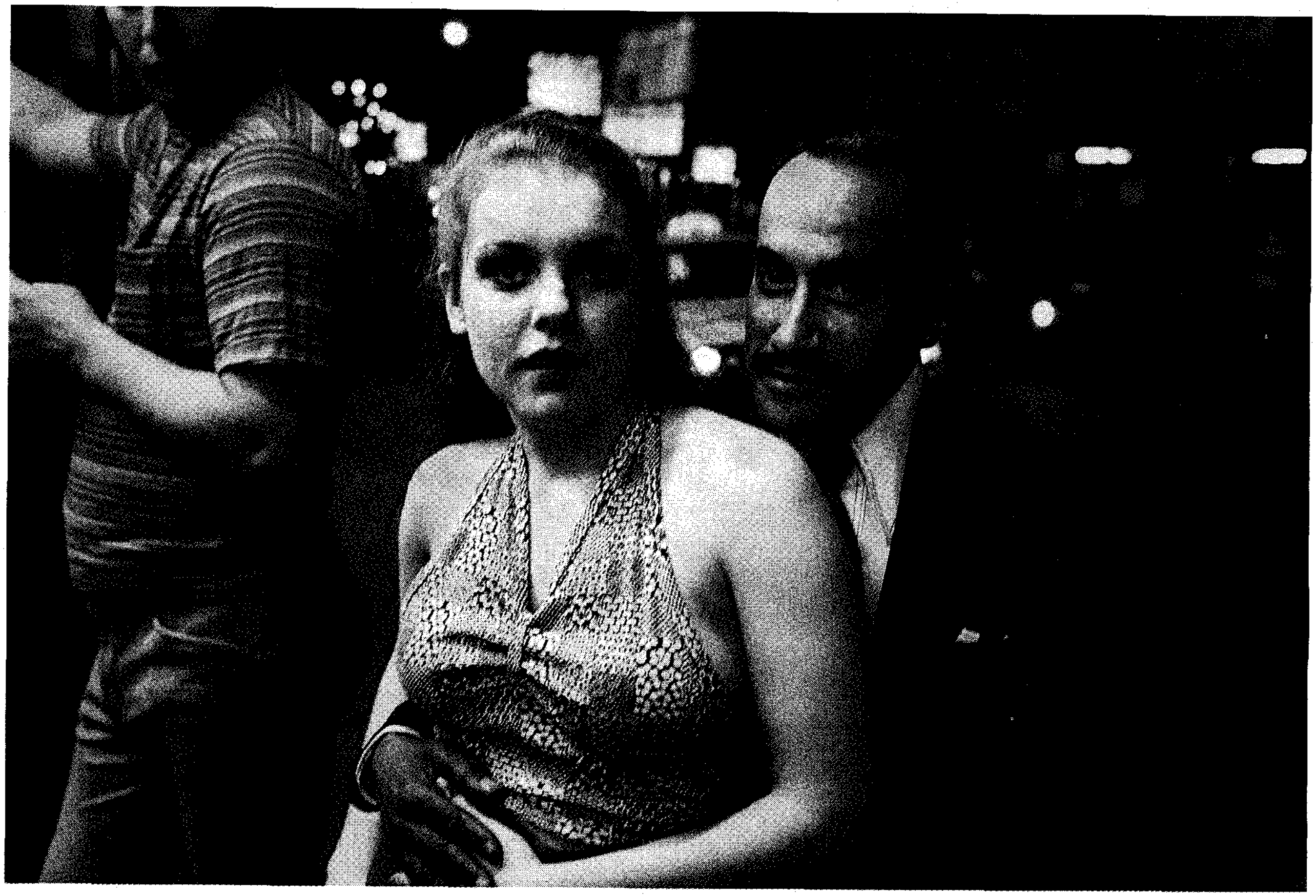
mourning ruins the lives of her daughters. Directed by Shepard Sobel. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

INNOCENTS
The director Rachel Dickstein and the dramaturge Emily Morse have transformed Edith Wharton's acutely observed nineteenth-century social drama "The House of Mirth" into an impressionistic dance-theatre piece. Lily Bart's gradual decline—from flower of New York society to debt-ridden blemish—is conveyed by Paula McGonagle through alternating spoken and danced interludes, and the twisting figures of McGonagle and the supporting cast evoke the dreamlike inner life of the heroine, who remains beguiling even in her ruin. (Ohio, 56 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Feb. 5.)

K.I. FROM "CRIME"
The Russian director Kama Ginkas makes his New York début with his interactive adaptation of a scene from Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment," performed mostly in Russian. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Freight Entrance Theatre, 208 W. 37th St. 212-868-4444.)



"Coty Lee, Washington Street," from 1975, by Roswell Angier, at Gitterman (see Photography).

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE
The New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players present the operetta in the year of its hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary. Hal Linden stars. Directed by Albert Bergeret. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Jan. 23.)

ALSO PLAYING

AFTER THE BALL
Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. (Closes Jan. 30.)

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BUG
Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Jan. 30.)

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-307-4100.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DEMOCRACY
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.

FAT PIG
Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. (Closes Feb. 5.)

GEM OF THE OCEAN
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

JEWTOPIA
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

LONE STAR LOVE
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MODERN ORTHODOX
Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

NEWSICAL
Upstairs at Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-307-4100.

9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.

A NUMBER
New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. (Through Feb. 13.)

PACIFIC OVERTURES
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. (Closes Jan. 30.)

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE RIVALS
Vivian Beaumont. 212-239-6200. (Closes Jan. 23.)

A SECOND HAND MEMORY
Atlantic, 33 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Jan. 23.)

700 SUNDAYS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.

THEY ALL KNEW
Wings, 154 Christopher St. 212-627-2961. (Through Jan. 22.)

TWELVE ANGRY MEN
American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.

WHITE CHOCOLATE
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 212-982-6782.

WHOOP!
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Jan. 30.)

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Jan. 30.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Highlights of the season's third week include Peter Martins's "Octet," set to Mendelssohn, two performances of Christopher Wheeldon's "Carnival of the Animals," narrated by John Lithgow, and the première of Wheeldon's "After the Rain." Set to Arvo Pärt's "Tabula Rasa" and "Spiegel im Spiegel," the new work includes a duet for Wendy Whelan and Jock Soto and also features Edwaard Liang, Ask

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MONDAY, JANUARY 24 AT 9PM

HBO

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la Cour, Maria Kowroski, and Sofiane Sylve. The fourth week offers Balanchine's Greek trilogy, "Apollo," "Orpheus," and "Agon," on Jan. 27. ♦ Jan. 18 at 7:30: "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ Jan. 19 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ Jan. 20 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ Jan. 21 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Polyphonia," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ Jan. 22 at 2: (an all-Balanchine program): "La Source," "Agon," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ Jan. 22 at 8: "Square Dance," "Octet," and "After the Rain." ♦ Jan. 23 at 3: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Octet," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ Jan. 25 at 7:30: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Agon." ♦ Jan. 26 at 8 and Feb. 1 at 7:30: "Prodigal Son," "After the Rain," and "Who Cares?" ♦ Jan. 27 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Apollo," "Orpheus," and "Agon." ♦ Jan. 28 at 8 (an all-Robbins program): "The Goldberg Variations" and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ Jan. 29 at 2: "Prodigal Son," "Octet," and "Who Cares?" ♦ Jan. 29 at 8: "La Source," "Eros Piano," "Octet," and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ Jan. 30 at 3: "After the Rain," "Orpheus," and "Who Cares?" (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

"CLASSICAL SAVION"

The final week of Savion Glover's season at the Joyce, in which he dances solo to music by Stravinsky, Bach, and other classical composers, performed live by a chamber ensemble. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 18-21 at 8, Jan. 22 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 23 at 2 and 7:30.)

NEW YORK FLAMENCO FESTIVAL 2005

Striving to be modern, many flamenco choreographers sacrifice depth of expression for flashy production values and superficial concepts. Not Eva Yerbabuena. Her program in 2002 was the high point of that year's festival—fresh and not at all old-fashioned, yet rooted in tradition and profound. Her company returns on Saturday with a new version of her 2002 show, called simply "Eva," and on Sunday with "5 Mujeres 5," in which Yerbabuena takes an emotional journey to maturity through love, lust, and madness. On Thursday and Friday, a mixed bill of musicians and dancers take the stage, including last year's discovery: the entrancing, mature-beyond-her-years Rocío Molina. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-545-7536. Jan. 27-29 at 8 and Jan. 30 at 7.)

"LYUBO"

A new dance-theatre piece by Chris Green is built around a phantom correspondence. When an American man goes missing in war-torn Bulgaria in the nineteen-twenties, his young daughter back home continues to receive packages and letters from him. Green layers projected texts, puppetry, and dance with live tuba, protean sets, and stark lighting. He is painstaking in his construction of visual images: a white dove spins rapidly in the dark, and the puppeteers' pale, solemn faces are used to eerie effect, hovering like halos above their black clothes. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 212-868-4444. Jan. 20-22 and Jan. 25-29 at 8:30 and Jan. 23 and Jan. 30 at 4 and 8:30.)

"MY PRICE POINT"

In his fourth solo show, the downtown monologuist Mike Albo dances and vamps his way through post-election America, a landscape awash in manufactured fear, hyper-consumerism, celebrity gossip, and reality TV. Rapid-fire dance sequences map the quick cultural shift from one trend to another—from vinyl to cassettes to iPods—in a retrospective of dance forms that embraces the Charleston, the twist, and hip-hop. Created with his longtime co-writer Virginia Heffernan and with the choreographer Cary Curran; directed by David Schweizer. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. Jan. 28-29 at 8 and Jan. 30 at 5. Through Feb. 13.)

BUGLISI/FOREMAN DANCE

Sleek young dancers raised in the company's Graham-influenced tradition dance the lead roles in two premières. In Jacqulyn Buglisi's "The Conversation," recorded female voices ring out as duos assume the postures of toreador and bull, hand-to-hand combatants, or halves of a sculpture. The soundscape also includes live cello, played by Maya Beiser. And in Donlin Foreman's "Gravel Bed" couples blend gestural movement with elegant, aggressive social dancing as they dance to a bandoneon score, composed and performed live by the Piazzolla protégé Daniel Binelli, with the pianist Polly Ferman. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 25 at 7, Jan. 26-28 at 8, Jan. 29 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 30 at 2 and 7:30.)

KEELY GARFIELD

Garfield's fans admire her canny mingling of dark humor and pathos, which reveals itself in arresting images. For instance, in her 2003 piece "Deep," when dancers set a silver inflated children's swimming pool whirling over their heads, the reference instantly became clear: the pool was a falling World Trade Center tower. In her season at Dance Theatre Workshop, Garfield shows that the emotional fallout of 9/11 is still on her mind. In "Disturbulance," set to Marc Ribot's original guitar score, Garfield and Walter Dundervill dance a psychosexually taut duet in matching red-and-white striped dresses that make them look like flappers-cum-Chrysler Buildings—or like tremulous American flags. The other new piece, "Scent of Mental Love," is a duet about romantic obsession (a "faux pas de deux," Garfield says). It's set to new songs by Rachelle Garniez in multiple styles—country and Western, opera, and cabaret. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Jan. 26-29 at 7:30. Through Feb. 5.)

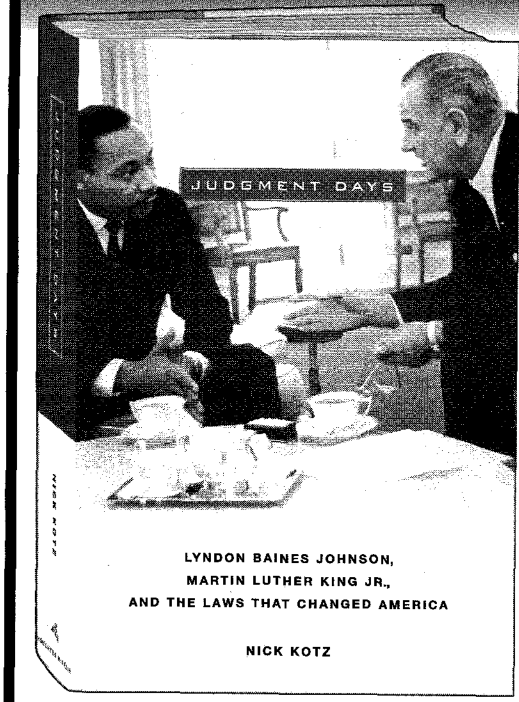
ALONZO KING'S LINES BALLET

With fashion-model looks and bravura technique, the dancers in this San Francisco-based troupe exemplify King's trademark vocabulary: sinuous motion grafted onto a muscular, classical base. In King's busy new "Before the Blues," they move to an eclectic score by Pharoah Sanders and Bernice Johnson Reagon that includes early African-American field recordings and narration by Danny Glover. For "Who Dressed You Like a Foreigner?" the Indian tabla master Zakir Hussain has provided a taped accompaniment. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-992-8484. Jan. 18 and Jan. 21-22 at 8 and Jan. 23 at 2.)

"BEACON"

Set in the harshly lit recesses of a former bathhouse, the new work by Yanira Castro + Company inhabits a

TWO GIANTS, OPPOSITE IN EVERY WAY, BUT TOGETHER THEY CHANGED AMERICA.



Pulitzer Prize-winner Nick Kotz draws on a wealth of newly available sources—from Johnson's taped conversations to FBI wiretap logs—to offer the first full account of their surprising relationship in those momentous times.

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TABLES FOR TWO

DÉVI

8 E. 18th St. (212-691-1300)—This upscale Indian spot, which opened in September and is owned by the Baluchi's empire, appears to have been imported from the set of a Bollywood spectacular or a showroom of ABC Carpet and Home, a block away. There's latticework detailing, chiffon drapery in shades of pink, and lots of candles, gilt, and mirrors. The room has a pleasant hush, and the servers, who wear orange kurta pajamas, cultivate an exotic languor.

The food is drawn from several regions and billed as "authentic home cooking." And although you are persistently reminded that you can make the dishes at home—the co-executive chef, Suvir Saran, recently published a cookbook—the cuisine is more haute than homey. "Indian food is better when it's cheap and messy," one diner complained. Maybe so, but the dishes offered here transcend any preciousness in presentation. The tasting menus—one featuring meat, the other vegetarian—are best for the adventurous (veal-brain and liver bruschettas make an appearance), the very hungry (each course is not as modestly portioned as the large number of them might suggest), and those who can withstand a whirlwind of spices.

Many of the most appealing items on the tasting menu are offered à la carte, like the *zimikand ke kofte* (soft and sweet yam dumplings in a tomato-onion sauce), or the Manchurian cauliflower, which is marinated in "spicy ketchup" (similar to a sweet-and-sour sauce). *Phool makhane kee sabzee*, though, is worth forsaking the tasting menu for: a silky curry studded with chewy lotus seeds and cashews, preferably sopped up with naan. If, as can happen, your waiter seems to forget about bringing the check, you might be just as happy to sink back against the cushions and savor the moment. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner and Sundays for dinner. Entrées $14-$29; tasting menus $55-$95.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

netherworld of phosphorescent-green glass pillars, bare walls, and cacophonous strings. (Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave., Park Slope. For tickets, call 212-924-0077. Jan. 21-22 at 7 and 9 and Jan. 23 at 6.)

DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL

The festival's final week celebrates ethnic and traditional dance forms, from Chechnya's ceremonial *zikr* and Hawaii's hula to Argentine tango and the rituals of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. The closing day features an awards ceremony for the festival winner, and a screening of the 1978 film "Dune Dance," made in Cape Cod by Sara Rudner and former members of the Twyla Tharp and Merce Cunningham companies. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5600. For a complete schedule, visit www.filmlinc.com. Through Jan. 22.)

ROSEANNE SPRADLIN

Spradlin's new "Future Past" is less harsh than much of her recent work, but it's still saturated with pain. As recorded voices speak of lost loves, dancers run in circles and drag around relics of the past, such as Christmas trees and coffins from which the bodies of other dancers tumble. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Jan. 19-20 and Jan. 22 at 7:30 and Jan. 21 at 7:30 and 10.)

YVONNE MEIER

In "Limpopo, Part Two," the choreographer and the dancers Antonietta Vicario and Osmani Tellez interact with giant foam shapes, creating snails and other fauna. In the solo "Mad Heidi," a Swiss miss unleashes her buried Alpine rage and *Sehnsucht* with a broom dance that sends up Alpine clichés. Part of Danspace's "City/Dans" series. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Jan. 20-23 at 8:30.)

ZEPHYR DANCE

The Chicago troupe comes to the Mulberry Street Theatre with Michelle Kranicke's new work, "Chewing" (a meditation on food and culture), and several repertory offerings, including an excerpt from Kranicke's "The Rhythm of Irreversible Direction" (which uses pedestrian movement) and two pieces by Emily Stein: the solo "Migration" and the duet "The Moment of Disappearing." (70 Mulberry St. 212-349-0126. Jan. 20-22 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

MICHAEL BRECKER QUINDECTET

The influential tenor saxophonist leads his quindectet, a fifteen-piece ensemble that first appeared on his 2003 album, "Wide Angles." With horns, reeds, and strings bolstering Gil Goldstein's atmospheric arrangements, this enlarged unit provides Brecker, an often relentless soloist, with a plethora of tonal colors to work with. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 19 at 8:30.)

ODD JOB

After exploding on the downtown scene in 1990 (and imploding shortly thereafter), this avant-garde supergroup is back with an unexpected one-night reunion. Fronted by the vocalist and Brooklynphilic storyteller Shelley Hirsch, the band also includes the new-music veterans David Weinstein and Ned Rothenberg and the idiosyncratic drummer Samm Bennett. Odd Job favors unorthodox reworkings of classic rock, soul, and jazz tunes, including an unforgettable cover of "Foxy Lady" featuring Hirsch's wailing vocal interpretation of Hendrix's effects-drenched guitar. For those few who remember the band, this reunion is at least as momentous as the recent Pixies re-formation. (Location One, 20 Greene St. 212-334-3347. Jan. 21 at 8:30.)

BRIGHT EYES

The wildly prolific musician Conor Oberst charms critics and neo-hippies alike with his janglý acoustic songs about drowned brothers, spiteful lovers, and other touching fare. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Jan. 25-27 at 8.)

"LEGENDS OF THE BLUES"

Robert Lockwood, Jr., David (Honeyboy) Edwards, Buddy Guy, and Little Milton head uptown (see This Week). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Jan. 28 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

Arturo O'Farrill's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, which usually performs in the midsized Allen Room, makes its début in the Rose Theatre, the crown jewel of the new complex on Columbus Circle. The vocalists Claudia Acuña and Herman Olivera lend a hand. (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Jan. 28-29 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Jan. 18: The **Soundtrack of Our Lives**, from Sweden, plays indie rock that matches the ethereal psychedelia of classic Pink Floyd with the rollicking swagger of Iggy and the Stooges. With the local favorites **Inouk**. Jan. 19: **Ray Lamontagne** was four years out of high school and working at a shoe factory in Maine when he heard a song on the radio one morning that changed his life: "Tree Top Flyer," by Stephen Stills. He quit his job, sold his van, bought a guitar, and immersed himself in the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Ray Charles, and Otis Redding. After Lamontagne started opening for established folkies at home, the governor introduced him to music-business contacts. Fast-forward a bit: Ethan Johns, who has worked

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with Ryan Adams, Kings of Leon, and the Jayhawks, produced his début album, "Trouble," a collection of intimate gems buffed to a Jeff Buckley-esque sheen.

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—The flamboyant singer-songwriter **Baby Dee** spent much of the mid-nineties cruising Greenwich Village on a custom-made tricycle (outfitted with a concert harp) singing Shirley Temple numbers and a witty sendup of Rudolph Giuliani. She also produced a series of poignant song cycles that fans liken to the Magnetic Fields' "69 Love Songs." Baby Dee can be found more often in Europe than in Manhattan these days, but on Jan. 24 she returns to be fêted by the **Wiyos, Curtis Eller, Corn Mo, Elyas Khan,** and other downtown musicians, who will perform her songs before she takes the stage.

CANAL ROOM
285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—Jan. 26: A tsunami benefit show with the soulful Detroit duo the **Platinum Pied Pipers** and New York's own fun-loving band the **Brazilian Girls.** With **DJ Nickodemus** and others.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Jan. 20: The hum-along country-pop of **Sister Hazel.** Jan. 21: **Jordan Knight,** the former teen idol from New Kids on the Block, recently received a career boost from his antics on the reality TV show "The Surreal Life." He's here with his old touring buddy **Tommy Page** and the emotive Atlanta rockers **Honestly.** Knight's brother and fellow former New Kid **Jon Knight** will also make a rare appearance, to the delight of aging N.K.O.T.B. fans. The hip-hop luminary **Rob Base** and another "Surreal Life" refugee, the iconic rap jester **Flavor Flav,** round out the bill. Jan. 25: Before **Norah Jones** was a household name, she was a member of the close-knit downtown acoustic-music community. She never left her friends behind, as this benefit show for Jason Crigler, a local guitarist who is recovering from a brain hemorrhage, proves. With **Rachel Loshak, Dennis Brennan,** and **Amy Correia.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Jan. 22: The **King of France** writes catchy, intelligent, highly melodic pop-rock songs with a strong and welcome dose of Midwestern angst (its front man and primary songwriter Steve Salad did time in the Twin Cities). Proving that a person can do two things well in life are the propulsive drummer and indie-rock historian Michael Azerrad and the lyrical keyboardist and music critic Thomas Bartlett, who round out this trio.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—Jan. 27: When most folks want to hear the music they like, they reach for the CD player or their iPod. The four members of **Human Television** have another approach. They write sharp songs that consciously call to mind their favorite bands—a likable collection from the late eighties that includes the Wedding Present, R.E.M., and New Order.

ROTHKO
116 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. (212-475-7088)—Jan. 22: The outspoken rapper **Jean Grae** was born Tsidi Ibrahim in South Africa, the daughter of the legendary jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, but she was raised in New York City. She's an integral part of the multi-borough hip-hop scene, so much so that she's known as the "cameo queen" for her numerous guest spots on albums by local performers. Jan. 27: The rap group **Northern State** is three assertive white women from Long Island (with the stage names Hesta Prynn, Spero, and Sprout) who would like to be the Beastie Boys of the new century.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Jan. 21: The gothic cabaret of **Barbez,** whose lead singer is an intense Russian dancer named Ksenia Vidyaykina. With **Beat Circus,** a carnivalesque septet from Boston.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Feb. 1: Montreal's **Arcade Fire** trades in accomplished, emotionally fragile experimental rock that plumbs the depths of mourning.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Jan. 19: Modern pianists don't come any more historically inclusive than **Dave Burrell,** whose solo piano recitals pore over everything from stride to free jazz.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Jan. 19-22: The saxophonist **Dave Leibman** and his big band are bent on radically updating the orchestral-jazz tradition. Jan. 27-29: **Flutology** unites three acclaimed wind players—Holly Hofmann, Ali Ryerson, and the legendary Frank Wess.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—The pianist **Hank Jones** (here with a trio through Jan. 23) is in his eighties, but he's still going strong. He turned in stunning performances last year on Joe Lovano's album "I'm All for You" and the Great Jazz Trio's release "Someday My Prince Will Come." A younger pianist, **Kenny Werner,** shares the bill with his own top-drawer trio. Jan. 25-30: A centennial celebration of the timeless composer Harold Arlen with **Ann Hampton Callaway, Paula West, Deena De Rose, Andy Bey,** and other noteworthy vocalists.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Jan. 18-23: The **Mulgrew Miller** trio. Miller is a product of Memphis, a town whose jazz pianists invariably fall under the shadow of the florid legend Phineas Newborn. Miller, who tested his mettle with Art Blakey in the eighties, can be loquacious, but his orations have eloquence and verve. Jan. 25-30: There's more than a little seventies fusion-funk vibe going on in the vibraphonist **Stefon Harris's** group Blackout. But Harris isn't on a complete retro trip; he's an in-the-moment improviser with ambitious plans for uniting the past with the present.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Jan. 19-23: The **Pat Martino** trio. His iconic stature now firmly established, this sleek and thoughtful guitarist has refined the knowledge and experience gained over four decades into a signature sound soaked with poetry. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through Jan. 23: The West Coast singer **Wesla Whitfield.** Jan. 25-30: The singer **Marlena Shaw,** an alumna of the Count Basie band, has made a career out of blurring the lines between jazz, pop, and R. & B.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Jan. 24: The trumpeter **Kermit Ruffins** and the vocalist **Topsy Chapman** bring the sounds of New Orleans north for a night. Jan. 26-30: The blues are on **Jason Moran's** mind; the pianist's new release, "Same Mother," retools the ageless form for the here and now.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Jan. 26: The piano-playing singer **Julian Fleisher** is the son of the great classical musician Leon Fleisher and a fixture on the downtown cabaret scene (he's the host and curator of music on Monday nights at the Starlight Bar and Lounge, in the East Village). A little over a year ago, in the middle of a solo show here, the actress **Martha Plimpton** sang a bluesy original with him. The song was such a hit with the audience that he invited her to join him for a series of shows in Los Angeles last summer. She did, and the two have been generating quite a following on both coasts with lively renditions of Fleisher's sharp-edged compositions and favorites by everyone from Irving Berlin and Joni Mitchell to Prince and Pink.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Jan. 21-22: **Louis Hayes** and his band. Hayes doesn't get the press that his peers routinely garner, but he remains one of the greatest hard-bop drummers. With experience as the rhythmic muscle for Cannonball Adderley and Oscar Peterson, he knows how to keep a band solid and swinging.

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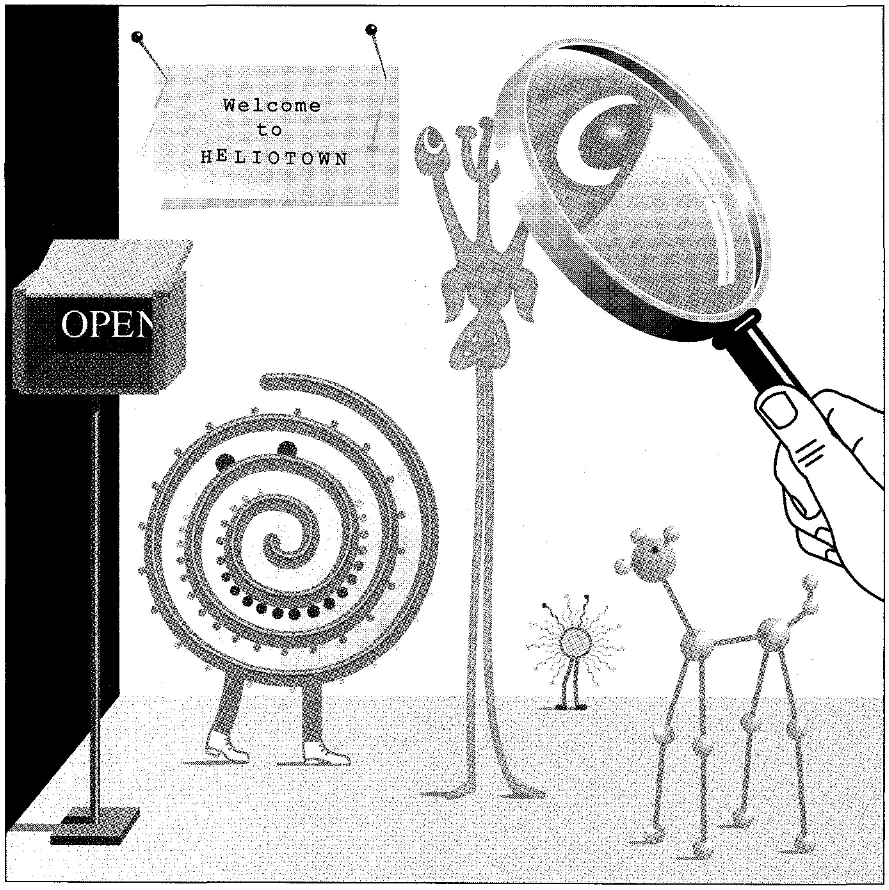
VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Jan. 23: Call him fearless—the saxophonist **Branford Marsalis's** latest release is a DVD and CD featuring his version of John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme," as iconic a recording as jazz has ever produced. Jan. 25-30: The **Geri Allen** trio. The celebrated pianist is one of the most accomplished players of her generation; perhaps that contributed to her selection as the first-ever pianist in Ornette Coleman's band. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—During the Edo period (1615-1868), court artists for the shoguns trained in the Kano style, learning techniques for painting screens and scrolls that favored classical imagery from Chinese sources: misty landscapes, plum blossoms, Taoist sages. **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm"** centers on a pair of four-panel screens made for the Tensho-in temple in Kyoto by the master Sansetsu (1589-1651). Split apart some forty years ago and sold to the Met and the Minneapolis Museum of Art, the pair are reunited here, along with related works from the Met's collection, which hint at the changes fostered by later Kano-trained artists like Utamaro (1753-1806), who mastered the "modern" art of ukiyo-e wood-block printing. Through June 5. ♦ **"Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640): The Drawings."** A hundred and fifteen of the Flemish master's drawings. Through April 3. ♦ Duccio's "Madonna and Child," circa 1300, a triumphant recent acquisition for the Met. Through March 13. ♦ **"Wild: Fashion Untamed."** Clothes and accessories derived from and inspired by animals. Through March 13. ♦ **"Art Deco Paris."** Through Feb. 6. ♦ **"All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Art, Form, and Function of Gilt Bronze in the French Interior."** Through Feb. 20. ♦ **"Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580-1620."** Through Jan. 30. ♦ **"Romare Bearden at the Met."** Through April 6. ♦ A wealth of art and artifacts recovered from the tombs of ancient luminaries is on view in **"China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D."** Through Jan. 23. ♦ **"William Kentridge,"** an exhibition of film, etchings, and drawings by the South African artist. Through April 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—The museum has reopened in its renovated and enlarged home and is presenting a series of exhibits related to its metamorphosis. ♦ **"Yoshio Taniguchi: Nine Museums"** celebrates the architect and his previous art-housing projects, of which the new Modern is the first outside of Japan. Through Jan. 31. ♦ **"Projects 82: Mark Dion—Rescue Archaeology."** Dion excavated traces of former Rockefeller town houses and the old Dorset Hotel from beneath the sculpture garden for this site-specific project. Through March 14. ♦ **"Michael Wesely: Open Shutter at the Museum of Modern Art."** The German photographer turned his long exposure method (he has left the shutter open for as long as three years) on MOMA while it was under construction. Through mid-2005. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 8.)



The bricolage of the New Mexican artist Thomas Ashcraft is on display at Cue.

NIGEL HOLMES

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire"** lines the Guggenheim's spiral with more than four hundred artifacts, from carvings depicting harvest work to implements for human sacrifice. Through Feb. 13. ♦ Among the artists represented in **"Recent Acquisitions: Contemporary Sculpture"** are Maurizio Cattelan, Robert Gober, Los Carpinteros, and Tom Friedman. Through Jan. 27. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

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WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—“**Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper**” opens Jan. 27. ♦ For a performance in Brussels in 1994, James Lee Byars wore a gold-lamé suit and a black top hat and danced around a room covered on three sides with gold leaf. He died in 1997, but the three-sided room—part sculpture, part stage, blending the rational geometry of minimalism with the religious mysticism of Egyptian tombs—remains a luminous self-memorial and a fitting centerpiece to “**James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence.**” A series of huge calligraphic ink drawings inspired both by Rothko and a decade spent in Japan are reminiscent of Motherwell’s “Elegies,” and three hundred and thirty-three handblown red glass balls are arranged in an abstract, curlicued formation titled “The Little Red Angel of Marseilles.” Through March 6. ♦ “**Political Nature,**” a modest gathering of prints and drawings by Walton Ford, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Frank Moore, and Stephanie Syjuco. Through March 27. ♦ “**Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium.**” A large-scale video installation made in 2001. Through March 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Raphael’s lush and enigmatic nude portrait, “La Fornarina,” is visiting the United States for the first time ever. Through Jan. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

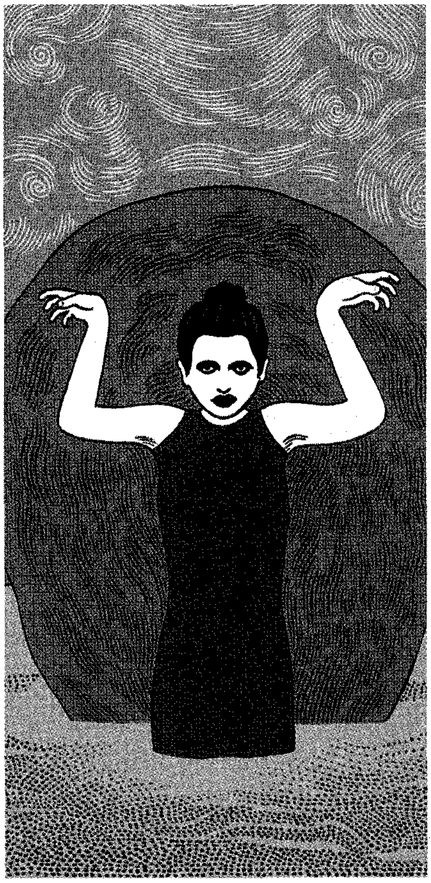
INSTITUTO CERVANTES
211-215 E. 49th St. (212-308-7720)—The Instituto has collaborated with Madrid’s MAPFRE VIDA Cultural Foundation to present a small selection of works on paper from the foundation’s collection. “**20th Century Spanish Drawings**” focusses on the early half of the designated period, with a preponderance of high-modernist superstars—Picasso, Miró, Dali, Gris, Tàpies. But it also surprises, as with a backward look at an 1876 portrait by Darío de Regoyos, collages by Remedios Varo and Eduardo Chillida, and a 1920 sketch of a crowded café shivering with proto-abstract lines of force, the work of Rafael Barradas, who invented “vibrationism.” Through Feb. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 12:30 to 6:30, and Saturdays, 10 to 1:30.)

NOGUCHI MUSEUM
9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Isamu Noguchi and Martha Graham were natural collaborators, with their overlapping interests in mythology and the embodiment of archetypal tensions in abstracted but corporeally sensual forms. Over the course of four decades starting in 1935, the sculptor designed sets for nineteen of Graham’s dances, focussing not on framing scenery but on freestanding objects that the dancers could stand on, hang from, and partner themselves with. Nine of these mise en scènes are on display in “**Noguchi and Graham: Selected Works for Dance.**” It’s poignant to see the scuff marks and handholds on the sculptures, but empty sets are only half the story. An adjacent video gallery displays footage of the dances, demonstrating what Noguchi meant when he described his sets as “parts of her anatomy, so to speak.” Through May 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DAVID ADJAYE
The Londoner Adjaye plays a favorite game of architects—constructing an inventive, luxurious space from cheap materials. “Asymmetric Chamber,” an interlocking set of boxcarlike rooms, is built from plywood planks and sided with a fibreglass wall that glows with diffused yellow light. Ambient music by Adjaye’s brother Peter completes the environment. As sculpture, the empty, flow-through space is pleasing, if faintly anticlimactic—one wishes its style didn’t so outweigh its usefulness. Through Jan. 28. (Bohen Foundation, 415 W. 13th St. 212-414-4575.)

THOMAS ASHCRAFT / TINA GIROUARD
Two little-known artists—chosen, respectively, by Bruce Nauman and Susan Rothenberg—impress, and one delights. Ashcraft, a New Mexican bricoleur, shows tiny, science-y setups and thimble-theatrical tableaux, spotlit in a darkened room. The concepts are odd but precise—a proposal for artistic surgical scars, memories of a grandfather who seemed to be able to cure warts by unthinking them. The method is intricate but never fussy. Girouard, a veteran of the nineteen-seventies and eighties New York avant-garde who has since lived and worked in Louisiana and Haiti, gets a pocket retrospective of decorative works in wallpaper, sequinned embroidery, and linoleum, among other stuffs, that fill physical space with cool and stirring social poetry. Through Jan. 29. (Cue, 511 W. 25th St. 212-206-3583.)


John King’s opera “La Belle Captive” premières at the Kitchen on Jan. 20.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

“100% ACID FREE”
Examples of fragmented “neo-narrative” art. Joyce Korotkin and Tim Maxwell both make drawings that pay homage to Albrecht Dürer’s prints, but neither spins a tale as straightforward as the German master’s “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” Steve Mumford’s ink-on-paper drawings of American soldiers in Iraq add up to a disjointed account of the current conflict. Ben Blatt’s rococo-gothic watercolors feature flowers, foliage, and chandeliers and are perhaps the most virtuosic, while Hans Op de Beeck’s DVD animation, made with black-and-white graphite drawings, compresses what seems like several centuries’ worth of growth, decay, and regeneration into nine minutes and forty-six seconds. Through Jan. 30. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 212-924-4212.)

“OUTSIDE: CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPES”
An all-star cast investigates the eternal subjects of trees, water, sky, and rock. There are even paintings (by Alison Moritsugu) on sawed cross-sections of logs. Not everything is pastoral—C-prints by Robert Attanasio and Olafur Eliasson bring us to bleak places, a stretch of gray asphalt from 1973 and an Icelandic glacier in 2003, respectively. The construction of Robert Smithson’s “Spiral Jetty” is documented in photographs by Gianfranco Gorgoni. With contributions by April Gornik, Alex Katz, Shirin Neshat, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Judy Pfaff, and many more. Through Jan. 24. (Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 212-206-6872.)

Short List

CHARLES GARABEDIAN
Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772.
Through Jan. 22.

“REALM OF THE SENSES”
Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.
Through Jan. 22.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

“A COLLECTOR’S CABINET OF CURIOSITIES: OBJECTS FOR A WUNDERKAMMER FROM THE 16TH TO 19TH CENTURY”
Kunstkammer Georg Laue, a Munich antiquities establishment specializing in Renaissance objects, fills the gallery with rock crystals, branching corals, illusionistic pictures, and bronze lizards cast from nature. Coinciding with “Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580-1620,” on view at the Met, this show is a delirious mix of the natural, the man-made, and the fanciful: a tiny ivory model of a pregnant woman with removable belly and casket-shaped carrying case, a pair of narwhal tusks retailed as unicorn’s horns, and—for anachronistic pause—a Donald Judd desk and an Yves Klein table on which to display them. Through Jan. 29. (Peter Freeman, 560 Broadway. 212-966-5154.)

“CREATING THEIR OWN IMAGE”
Art by women of color, from the abstractions of Gaye Ellington and Howardena Pindell to the politically charged, slave-era silhouette vignettes of Kara Walker. Empowerment becomes a vanity showcase for Renée Cox, who poses nude as Liberty and the Hottentot Venus. More tempered and intelligent Photo-Conceptualism is represented by Adrian Piper, Carrie Mae Weems, and Lorna Simpson. Two other standouts are Chakaia Booker, whose sculptures, made of cut-up rubber tires, are both brutal and oddly delicate, and Faith Ringgold, a senior stateswoman of African-American art, whose red-and-green poster of U.S. battle sites (1971) proclaims, “This map of American violence is incomplete. Please write in whatever you find lacking.” Through Jan. 30. (Aronson Galleries, Parsons School of Design, 66 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. 212-229-8987.)

“TOO MUCH POLLUTION TO DEMONSTRATE: SOFT GUERRILLAS IN TEHRAN’S CONTEMPORARY ART SCENE”
Work by five young Iranian artists. Barbad Golshiri’s video shows the artist solemnly cutting his long hair, which spills in scriptlike arabesques over a white surface; Roxanna Daryadanesh carpets the floor with newspapers, many of them now banned; Vahid Hakim’s abstract paintings are inspired by Persian motifs. All meditate on personal freedom, aesthetic simplicity, and encrypted social commentary, a message most strongly expressed in Shahab Fotouhi and Neda Razavipour’s bathtub filled with inky black water and floating glass bottles containing live goldfish. Through Feb. 9. (Apexart, 291 Church St. 212-431-5270.)

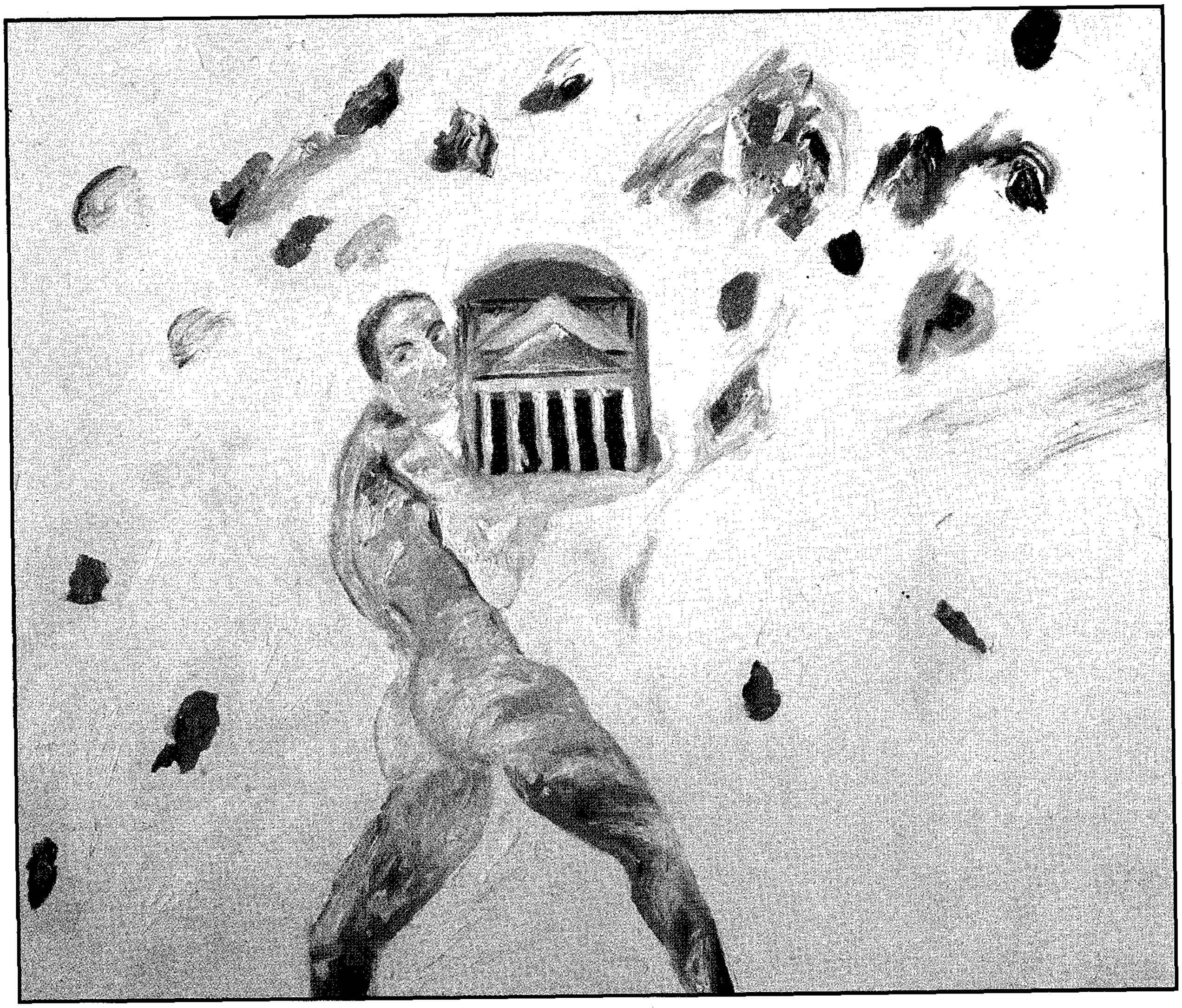
Short List

SU-MEI TSE
Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.
Through Jan. 22.

RICHARD TUTTLE
The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St.
212-219-2166. Through Feb. 26.

“BREATH”
2 West St. For more information, call Creative Time, at 212-206-6674. Through March 30.

“FIELD OF COLOR: TANTRA DRAWINGS FROM INDIA”
The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St.
212-219-2166. Through Jan. 22.



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PHOTOGRAPHY

THOMAS ALLEN
Pop-up art ascends to sublime heights in these twenty-by-twenty-four-inch chromogenic prints of constructions made from old books. Why not view the books themselves? Because here the artist controls the lighting, perspective, and focus to create multidimensional scenes rich in detail. In "Swell," a ship with numbered sails rides the wave of the unabridged dictionary it was clipped from. In "Thirst," a femme fatale holds a glass out from her cover, to be filled by a rogue from a neighboring volume. Through Feb. 5. (Foley, 547 W. 27th St. 212-244-9081.)

ROSWELL ANGIER
Expect to be moved, not titillated, by these sixteen vintage black-and-white prints from the mid-nineteen-seventies of strippers in Boston's red-light district. The photographer, born in 1940, knew his subjects and, as a young man, featured them in his book "'. . . A Kind of Life': Conversations in the Combat Zone." Angier's portraits of the denizens of such places as the Two O'Clock Club and the Mousetrap Cabaret are deeply humane, giving these objects of voyeurism a chance to look back at you. Also on view are eleven black-and-white prints, dating from 1978 to 1982, documenting the lives of Native Americans in New Mexico and Arizona. Through Jan. 29. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

TRISH MORRISSEY
A set of color prints that depict the thirty-seven-year-old Irish photographer and her sister—posed as themselves as children, their parents, and various aunts and friends. Morrissey uses dated clothes like tight running shorts and multicolored nylon coats to create her reimagined family moments, along with formal gimmickry—in "August 8, 1982," a pose at the seaside is marred by two blurry fingers over the lens. Through Feb. 26. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

STUART O'SULLIVAN
These large color prints by a young South African, now living in New York, capture the world of affluent white Europeans who live in post-apartheid South Africa. There are interiors with the quality of still-lifes ("Roses and Lemons" features a prized collection of books devoted to the region; vintage family photographs hang on the wall next to a security device) and portraits of O'Sullivan's relatives and friends (both black and white), at home and in the countryside. An image of spiky, orange flowering plants has a delicate tracery of concertina wire in the background. Through Feb. 26. (Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Three important photographers, Bill Owens, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and E. J. Bellocq, provide a primer of sorts on twentieth-century American portraiture. Meatyard, an optician by trade who was from Lexington, Kentucky, died young in 1972, at the height of his powers. He took eerie, surrealistic pictures of his friends and family, often posed wearing plastic masks. This is the largest show of the photographer's work ever seen in New York, with a hundred and fifty images that span his too short career. Bellocq photographed prostitutes in their rooms around 1912 in a straightforward, respectful way. The work was forgotten until Lee Friedlander discovered Bellocq's glass negatives in a New Orleans antique shop. I.C.P. has a selection of Friedlander's prints, shown at MOMA in 1970, and recently discovered vintage prints. Bill Owens's book "Suburbia" made him an instant star when it was published in 1972. His pictures of young families in their new tract homes in Livermore, California, spoke to Western migration, consumer culture, and shifting cultural mores. These equally canny pictures, entitled "Leisure," were taken about ten years later, just before Owens quit photography and opened a microbrewery. Through Feb. 27. (1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000.)

Short List

LALLA ESSAYDI
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.
Through Feb. 26.

SYLVIA PLACHY
Hunter/Fox, 35 E. 67th St. 212-288-3535.
Through Feb. 26.

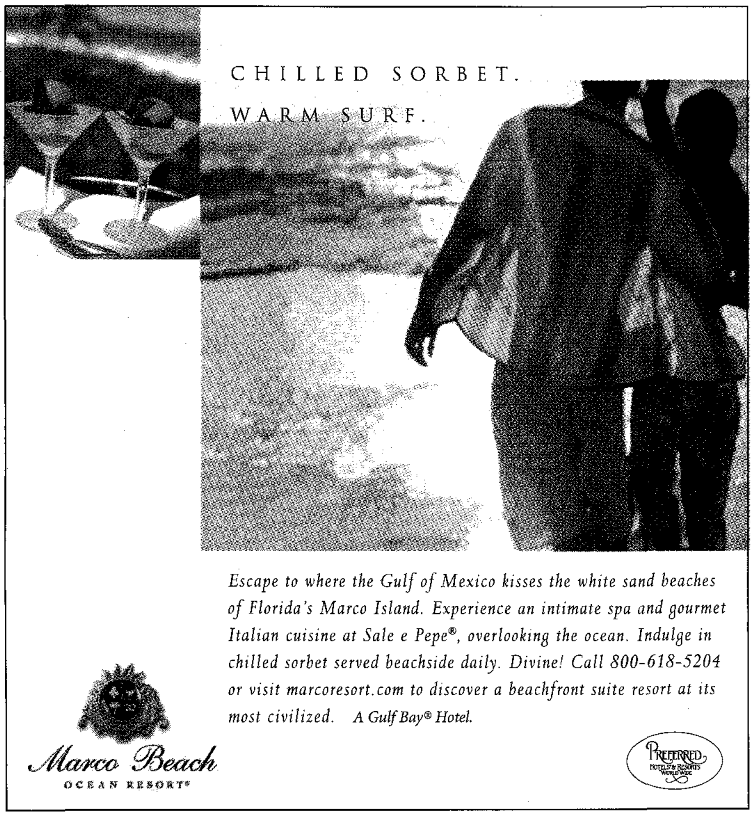
ED RUSCHA, ROBERT FRANK, AND WALKER EVANS
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through Jan. 29.

MALICK SIDIBÉ
Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701.
Through Feb. 5.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Jan. 19 at 10:15 A.M.: An auction of Impressionist and modern art. ♦ Jan. 20 at 2, Jan. 21 at 10:15 A.M., and Jan. 23 at noon: "God don't want much style," said William Edmondson, the first self-taught black American artist to be offered a show at MOMA, in 1937. Yet two of Edmondson's witty and substantial limestone sculptures, which stand out in a vast and impressive three-day auction of Americana that includes folk art, furniture, stoneware, and Chinese export porcelain, prove that genius will always suffice. ♦ Jan. 22 at 10:15 A.M.: An eerie portrait of two New Hampshire children by the nineteenth-century husband-and-wife painting team of Ruth and Samuel Shute is the centerpiece of this sale of American folk art from the collection of Jon and Rebecca Zoler, who, for twenty-five years, amassed rare salt-glazed stoneware, copper weathervanes, and duck decoys. ♦ Jan. 22 at 2: The Browns and the Goddards, two family lines who made Colonial Rhode Island into an industrial powerhouse, intertwine magnificently in a circa-1760 Chippendale-carved mahogany tea table, made for Nicholas Brown and attributed to John Goddard of Newport—the highlight of a sale of furniture, rare letters, and other property belonging to the Goddard family. ♦ Jan. 26 at 10:15 A.M.: In this auction of Old Master drawings, many lots possess the raw beauty of art that was never meant to be finished. Géricault, in his "Horse with Groom," uses meticulous brushwork to elevate a mundane stable scene into a sublime world of light and shadow; runny brown ink flows from the pen of Jacopo Zucchi, who, through a series of rapid but confident gestures, depicts a man raising an architectural model toward the heavens. ♦ Jan. 27 at 2: Art works (by Volaire and Goya, among others) from the Enlightenment era. ♦ Jan. 27 at 10:15 A.M.: Works by Venetian artists, none more extraordinary than Longhi's darkly playful "The Ridotto in Venice" (which could bring almost a million dollars), are prominent in a selection of Old Master paintings that also features major works by Romney, Meléndez, van Goyen, and Botticelli. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Jan. 19 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale marking the hundredth anniversary of Georg Jensen's renowned silver-design firm includes eight hundred items from a private collection that contains the largest and most comprehensive accumulation of Jensen centerpieces, candelabra, electric lamps, and flatware. ♦ Jan. 20 at 2 and Jan. 21 at 10 A.M. and 2: This sale of American furniture, folk art, silver, and prints brims with exceptional works in each of the categories—including a rare carved mahogany marble-top pier table, produced in the mid-eighteenth century and preserved for a dozen generations by the storied Cortelyou family. "Aurora," a watercolor on silk of the goddess riding her chariot by the nineteenth-century painter Ruth Downer, is another highlight. ♦ Jan. 25 at 10 A.M.: Though the Italians dominate this sale of Old Master and nineteenth-century drawings, the highlights belong to the French. Moreau's watercolor of St. Sebastian pierced by arrows is expected to command nearly half a million dollars; Ingres's lead-and-chalk "Portrait of a Man" is as striking in its simplicity as its title. ♦ Jan. 26 at 10 A.M. and 2: An



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extravagant sale of Old Master paintings includes an exquisite selection of eighteenth-century *vedute* paintings, early-Renaissance Italian paintings, and Italian and Dutch still-lifes. The undisputed centerpiece is a magnificent Canaletto painting of the Bacino di San Marco in Venice; Fragonard's "The Cart of Roses" and Aert van der Neer's "Winter Landscape," which has not been seen in public since the nineteen-twenties, are other highlights. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

SWANN
Jan. 24 at 2:30: Géricault's "Portrait Study of a Young Man," an oil on paper, holds a commanding lead in an auction of Old Master drawings. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

WINTER ANTIQUES SHOW
Eighteenth-century French wallpapers, model ships, a John Singer Sargent sketch, and the odd Corinthian helmet are but a few of the curiosities for sale at the fifty-first edition of the show, to be held as usual at the 7th Regiment Armory. (Park Ave. at 66th St. 718-292-7392. Jan. 21-30.)

ANTIQUES AT THE PIERS
Those with a keen taste for Americana will find more than three hundred dealers at this fair, peddling furniture, silver, jewelry, glass, and folk art. Enthusiasts itching for more can catch a free shuttle to "Antiques at the Armory," another Stella show, at the 69th Regiment Armory in midtown. (Piers 90 and 92, Twelfth Ave. at 55th St. 212-255-0020. Jan. 22-23.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Jan. 26 and Feb. 1 at 8 and Jan. 29 at 1:30: The magnificent sprawl of Franco Zeffirelli's 1987 production of **"Turandot"**—abetted this year by Bertrand de Billy's swift but approximate conducting—has never encouraged dramatic intimacy or concentration of style. It's a platform for showboat singing, and Andrea Gruber, a committed artist who has enough *squillo* for five Turandots, and Johan Botha, a sturdy, un-Italian Calàf with secure, if colorless, high notes, deliver. Krassimira Stoyanova, as Liù, is a nice discovery: her trumpetlike soprano has more than enough pliancy to project the slave girl's aching vulnerability. ♦ Jan. 28 at 8 and Jan. 31 at 7:30: Few people can convincingly belt out the words "Abraham Lincoln!" while wearing an ivory kimono. Kallen Esperian, fortunately, is one of them, and in **"Madama Butterfly"** she sings the title role with a delicious blend of power and sweet sostenuto. The Pinkerton, Roberto Aronica, shows excellent tonal control, even at high volumes, while Vassily Gerello sings Sharpless with tenderness and tact; Emmanuel Villaume, an elegant interpreter of Mediterranean repertory, conducts. ♦ Jan. 29 at 8: Jonathan Miller's production of **"Pelléas et Mélisande"** returns, with William Burden and Anne Sofie von Otter in the title roles, José van Dam as Golaud, and Felicity Palmer as Geneviève; James Levine. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

L'OPÉRA FRANÇAIS DE NEW YORK
The little Francophone company goes up against the Met with an intimate production (by the imaginative team of Jean-Philippe Clarac and Olivier Deloeuil) of **"Pelléas et Mélisande,"** performed with Debussy's piano score. The cast features Kevin Greenlaw, Patricia Petibon, Brian Davis, and Joyce Castle; Yves Abel conducts. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. Jan. 19 and Jan. 21 at 7:30.)

"LA BELLE CAPTIVE"
The Kitchen presents the American première of John King's "art-funk" electronic opera (which he not only directs but accompanies on guitar), a polyphonic novel-in-sound that uses texts by Robbe-Grillet and poems by women imprisoned in the nineteen-seventies by the Argentine junta. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Jan. 20-22 at 8.)

"A NIGHT AT THE OPERA"
Rudolph Palmer conducts the Queen's Chamber Band and a cast headed by the soprano Julianne Baird, in the New York première of Gluck's comic one-acter **"La Corona."** This concert version is offered on a double bill with Haydn's solo cantata "Arianna a Naxos." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 25 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

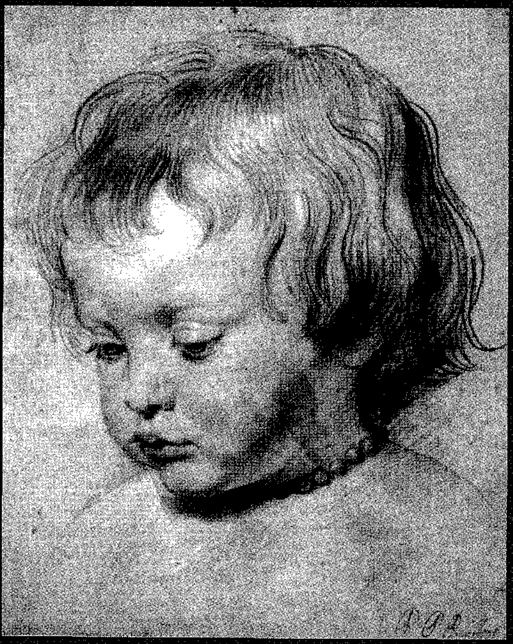
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel's next program with his orchestra is a concert of shadows and cries: Fauré's limpid yet melancholy incidental music to "Pelléas et Mélisande" (the Maeterlinck play, not the Debussy opera), Aaron Jay Kernis's death-haunted pocket concerto "Lament and Prayer" (with the violinist Glenn Dicterow), and Sibelius's grimly triumphant First Symphony. (Jan. 20 at 7:30, Jan. 21 at 11 A.M., and Jan. 22 at 8.) ♦ Maazel returns to conduct Honegger's locomotive tone poem "Pacific 231," Rachmaninoff's seldom heard Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Stephen Hough), and Ravel's complete "Daphnis et Chloé" (with the Westminster Symphonic Choir). (Jan. 26-27 at 7:30 and Jan. 29 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
The intrepid ensemble continues "Orchestra Underground," a series exploring the increasingly close connection between composition and technology, with a concert of world-première works by Eve Beglarian ("FlamingO," for three simultaneous "bands"), Carlos Carrillo, and others. Steven Sloane conducts. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 21 at 7:30.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine conducts two Carnegie Hall concerts. Jan. 23 at 3: Weber's Overture to "Oberon," Carter's "Variations for Orchestra," and Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" (with the mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson and the tenor Ben Heppner). ♦ Jan. 30 at 3: Another Weber overture (to "Der Freischütz") begins a program of music by Webern, Wuorinen, Ravel ("Shéhérazade," with the mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter), and Dvořák (the Symphony No. 8). (212-247-7800.)

PETER PAUL RUBENS THE DRAWINGS

The first major U. S. retrospective devoted to the drawings of Peter Paul Rubens offers an extraordinary view into the creative process of this Flemish genius.



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Peter Paul Rubens, *Nicolaas Rubens Wearing a Coral Necklace*, ca. 1619, Albertina, Vienna.
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CINCINNATI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Paavo Järvi leads his wonderfully reënergized ensemble in Scandinavian music: symphonies by Sallinen and Sibelius (the Fifth, in E-Flat Major) and the Piano Concerto by Grieg (with Lars Vogt). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 24 at 8.)

FOCUS! FESTIVAL: JUILLIARD SYMPHONY
Reinbert de Leeuw conducts the orchestra in Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15 and Gubaidulina's "Stimmen . . . Verstummen," the finale of a six-concert festival devoted to works by the leading lights of the late-Soviet-era avant-garde. (Juilliard Theatre. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406. Jan. 28 at 8.)

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The magisterial Pierre Boulez, leading Britain's best orchestra, begins a three-day concert series with Mahler's Fifth Symphony, preluded by his own "Livre pour Cordes," a lushly impressionist early work. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 27 at 8.)

LAHTI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Osmo Vänskä, best known as the music director of the Minnesota Orchestra, comes to Avery Fisher Hall to show off the superb Finnish ensemble he has led since 1988, conducting rarely heard Piano Concertos by Tchaikovsky (the Third) and Prokofiev (the First), both with Louis Lortie, and music by Sibelius ("Pohjola's Daughter" and the Symphony No. 2). (212-721-6500. Jan. 30 at 3.)

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
Radu Lupu is the guest artist for a four-concert series that begins with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 11 ("The Year 1905"). Franz Welser-Möst conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 1 at 8.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
Shostakovich's "Seven Romances on Poems by Aleksandr Blok" and Prokofiev's "Five Poems by Anna Akhmatova" are the highlights of the festival's all-Russian concert, performed by the soprano Dina Kuznetsova and the violinist Juliette Kang, among others, with the pianist Steven Blier. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 19 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Jan. 20-21 at 7:30: The flutist Michael Parloff and the pianist Steven Beck offer a thoughtful concert that interweaves works for flute and piano by Bach and by his twentieth-century disciple Paul Hindemith—the first of four programs running at the floating chamber-music series in the coming weeks. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For a complete schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Jan. 20 at 8: Music by Mozart, Carter, and Beethoven, performed by the radiantly virtuosic oboist Heinz Holliger and the Juilliard String Quartet. ♦ Jan. 21 at 7: The pianist Ruth Laredo, continuing her Russian series, joins the soprano Courtenay Budd and friends for Shostakovich's Piano Quintet and a selection of songs. ♦ Jan. 29 at 8: Steve Reich and Musicians play classics by the minimalist master (including "Music for Pieces of Wood" and "Different Trains"). (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949.)

LEIF OVE ANDSNES
The formidable pianist shows his range in Schubert's Sonata in D Major, D. 850, a new work by Bent Sørensen, and Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 20 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE: CHITOSE OKASHIRO
Okashiro, another enterprising artist whose profile has been raised by George Steel's patronage, begins Miller's "Brahms the Progressive" series with a concert of solo-piano works that features the Op. 118 and Op. 119 Klavierstücke along with pieces by Messiaen and Takemitsu. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Jan. 21 at 8. For a complete schedule of concerts, see www.millertheatre.com.)

TAKÁCS QUARTET: "ULTIMATE BEETHOVEN"
The quartet, presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, offers its finely detailed interpretations of the Beethoven string quartets. Jan. 21 at 8: The C-Minor and A-Major Quartets from Op. 18 precede the Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132. ♦ Jan. 23 at 5: In D Major, Op. 18, No. 3, in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2, and in E-Flat Major, Op. 127. ♦ Jan. 28 at 8: In B-Flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6, in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3, and in F Major, Op. 135. ♦ Jan. 30 at 5: The series concludes with the Quartets in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1, in B-Flat Major, Op. 130, and the Grosse Fuge, Op. 133. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)

OBERLIN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE
The conservatory's finest come to Merkin Concert Hall to perform works by Harvey, Wuorinen, and Maxwell Davies ("Eight Songs for a Mad King"). (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 23 at 8.)

"THE RENAISSANCE MUSE"
Mark Lamos directs this dramatic vehicle for the countertenor Andreas Scholl, which will also feature the actress Laila Robins, the lutenist Crawford Young, and the harpist Stacey Shames (see This Week). (John Jay Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500. Jan. 26 and Jan. 28-29 at 8.)

"THE SONG CONTINUES . . ."
The bass René Pape (with the pianist Brian Zeger) is the special guest in "A Feast of Folksongs," the final recital of the Marilyn Horne Foundation's annual workshop for talented young singers. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 28 at 7:30.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: ARTEK
New York's most prestigious early-music series presents the harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth's excellent local band of singers and players, who will perform excerpts from the Monteverdi operas. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Jan. 30 at 4.)

SPECULUM MUSICAE
This eminent new-music group, concentrating on birthdays this season, celebrates George Perle's ninetieth year with a performance of his "Solo Partita" (1965)—for a violinist altering on viola—as well as works by Steven Mackey, Allen Anderson, and Mario Davidovsky. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 31 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE PAPER BAG PLAYERS
The noted children's theatre group opens its forty-sixth season with a new show of ragtime-infused amusements called "Put on Your Shoes, I've Got News!" (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. For more information, visit www.paperbagplayers.org. Starts Jan. 22.)

READINGS
Jan. 19 at 8: Robert Creeley, William Corbett, John Giorno, and other poets join Irene Aebi, Roswell Rudd, Juni Booth, Suzan Frecon, and various musicians and artists for a tribute to the late jazz saxophonist Steve Lacy. (The Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Jan. 24 at 8: The actors Philip Bosco, Rosemary Harris, Paul Hecht, and Paxton Whitehead gather for a staged reading of George Bernard Shaw's "Don Juan in Hell." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ Jan. 30 at 2: The poets Rustem Galitch and Inna Yesilevskaya celebrate the life of Boris Pasternak, with the help of the guitarist Sergei Pobedinsky and the pianist Michael Tsayger. (Central Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza. 718-230-2100.)

TALKS
Jan. 19 at 6:30: Harold Evans, the author of "They Made America—From the Steam Engine to the Search Engine: Two Hundred Years of Innovators," leads a discussion about innovation in New York City, with Joan Ganz Cooney, the co-founder of the Children's Television Workshop, Laurence J. Kirshbaum, the chairman of Time Warner Books, and other corporate leaders. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. 212-534-1672.) ♦ Jan. 26 at 6:30: The travel writer Redmond O'Hanlon relates his recent experience aboard a Scottish fishing trawler in the North Atlantic. (The Explorers Club, 46 E. 70th St. Tickets at the door.)

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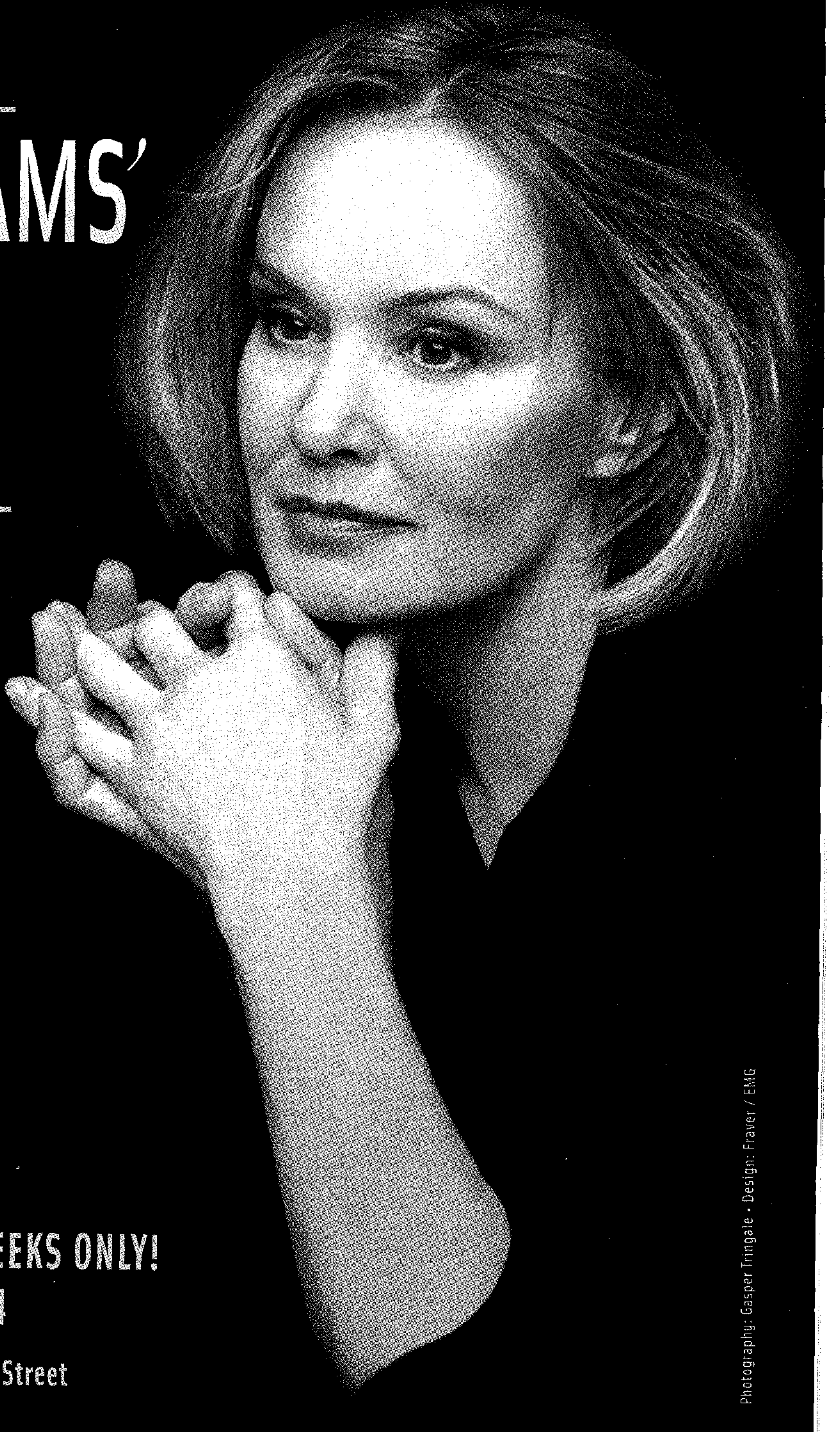

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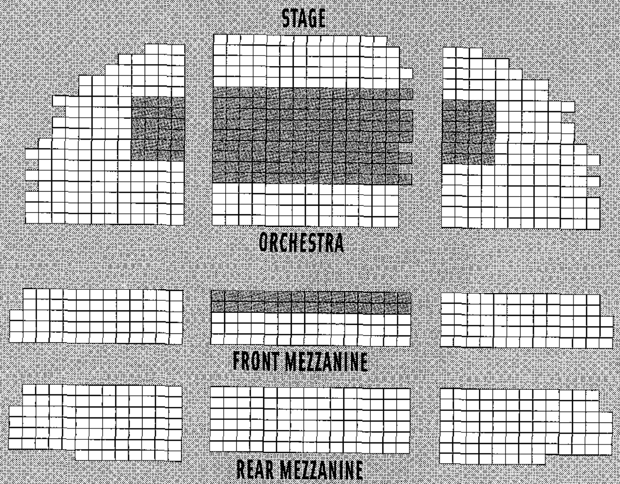

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MOVIES OPENING

ALONE IN THE DARK
Christian Slater investigates the paranormal, in a horror film based on the video-game series. Directed by Uwe Boll. With Tara Reid and Stephen Dorff. Opening Jan. 28.

ARE WE THERE YET?
A stylish bachelor (Ice Cube) offers to drive his new girlfriend's two children to Vancouver, British Columbia, from Portland, Oregon, for the holidays, in a comedy directed by Brian Levant. Opening Jan. 21.

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
An update of the 1976 action thriller, in which a Detroit police station comes under siege by a criminal gang. The cast includes Ethan Hawke, Laurence Fishburne, Maria Bello, and Ja Rule. Directed by Jean-François Richet. Opening Jan. 19.

HEAD-ON
A drama about a marriage of convenience between a depressed man and a rebellious Muslim woman, who are both second-generation Turkish immigrants in Germany. In Turkish and German. Directed by Fatih Akin. Opening Jan. 21.

HIDE AND SEEK
After his wife's suicide, a widower (Robert De Niro) moves upstate with his daughter (Dakota Fanning), who has an unpredictable imaginary friend, in a thriller directed by John Polson. Opening Jan. 28.

LOST EMBRACE
A college dropout finds work in his mother's lingerie store, in a comedy set in the Jewish community of Buenos Aires. Written and directed by Daniel Burman. In Spanish. Opening Jan. 28. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

MACHUCA
Andrés Wood directed this coming-of-age film about the life of a young upper-middle-class boy during Pinochet's rise to power. In Spanish. Opening Jan. 19. (Film Forum.)

MONSIEUR N.
A historical drama that supposes Napoleon (Philippe Torreton) escaped his exile on Elba. Directed by Antoine de Caunes. In French. Opening Jan. 21.

SHE'S ONE OF US
In Siegrid Alnoy's début drama, a temp employee (Sasha Andres) does unsettling things in various attempts to bond with her co-workers. In French. Opening Jan. 21. (Village East Cinemas.)

TRAVELLERS & MAGICIANS
A drama set in Bhutan, in which a university graduate and a young farm boy both long for less isolated lives. Directed by Khyentse Norbu. In Dzongkha. Opening Jan. 28. (Quad Cinema.)

WATERMARKS
Yaron Zilberman's documentary about the champion women swimmers of the Jewish sports club Hakoah, in Vienna, which was shut down by the Nazis in 1938. Opening Jan. 21.

FILM NOTES

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
A bold but fruitless attempt to disguise the fact that Lloyd Webber's extravaganza belongs on the stage. Theatre audiences, an easily tickled crowd, may still be aroused by the sight of dry ice being puffed across the footlights, but moviegoers, who regularly witness whole cities being trashed, are made of sterner stuff. They are also liable to feel cheated by weak casting, and thus the choice of Gerard Butler (the Phantom), Emmy Rossum (Christine, his protégée), and Patrick Wilson (the Vicomte, her No. 2 squeeze) is unlikely to find universal favor. The score remains a cunning consolation to those who are frightened by the thought of real opera, and the director and co-writer is Joel Schumacher, which means that the enterprise is best viewed, if at all, as a prolonged exercise in interior decoration. With Minnie Driver, enjoying herself no end as a screaming diva.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/3/05.) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

SOUND
SCENE
TAKE
1
2
3
PROD
Etc...

THE ASSASSINATION OF RICHARD NIXON
In February, 1974, a man named Sam Byck attempted to hijack a commercial jetliner and crash it into the White House in order to kill Richard Nixon, who represented everything that Sam hated about America. Sam's attempt was a failure; he was no better at hijacking than he was at anything else. This bleak but fully felt first film by the writer-director Niels Mueller demonstrates how a fellow who seemed an ordinary loser—a screwup at work and at home—might arrive at such an extreme state. Sean Penn uses a nervous smile and a stammer to convey the outer uncertainties of his character's freakishly stubborn idealism. The movie re-creates Sam's miserable days with enough detail and sympathy to come within hailing distance of such emblematic works of American disillusion as Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and Saul Bellow's "Seize the Day." With Don Cheadle, Naomi Watts, and Jack Thompson.—*David Denby* (1/10/05) (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

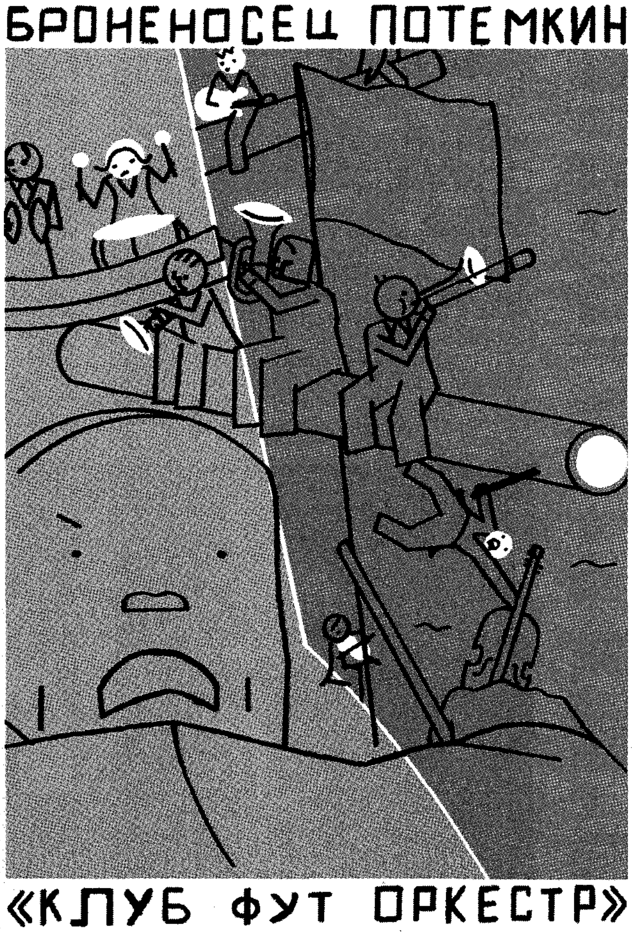
At MOMA, a documentary portrait of the photographer William Eggleston.

THE AVIATOR
The billionaire madman, the taloned hermit of Las Vegas eating nothing but steak and peas—that was the haggard face in the tabloids that millions of us knew in the years before Howard Hughes's death, in 1976. Martin Scorsese's brilliantly entertaining movie goes back to the period when Hughes (Leonardo DiCaprio) was an exhilaratingly handsome and daring young man. The narrative, concocted by the screenwriter John Logan, is not meant to be taken literally. It's a fantasia about a studly capitalist prince who produces and directs movies, designs and flies airplanes, and sleeps with dozens of beautiful actresses and starlets. Scorsese and the designer Dante Ferretti press the young tycoon into the svelte Art Deco look of the period; in his tuxedos and casual beige flying duds, Hughes becomes the pictorial embodiment of restless bravado. Toward the end, there are glimpses of the germ-haunted paranoid that Hughes would become, but the movie is consistently lighthearted and engaging, a sort of pop "Citizen Kane." With Cate Blanchett doing a nervy imitation of Katharine Hepburn, Alec Baldwin as Hughes's rival, and Alan Alda as the corrupt Maine senator Owen Brewster.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BAD EDUCATION
In an obscure parochial school in rural Spain, two young boys, Ignacio and Enrique, fell in love. But the boys were only eleven, and the affair was broken up by a priest and schoolmaster named Manolo. The priest, however, wasn't simply enforcing the rules. Father Manolo had already laid hands on Ignacio, and he wanted him entirely for himself. Pedro Almodóvar's extraordinary new drama, which is both a summary of his career and a deepening of his recent style, opens sixteen years after the affair, in 1980. Ignacio (Gael García Bernal), now a young actor, brings a manuscript to Enrique (Fele Martínez), who has become a well-known film director in Madrid. The manuscript chronicles the boys' friendship and what happened to Ignacio—he became a drag queen and a blackmailer. We see the story enacted; later, Enrique turns it into a movie, and we see that being filmed, too, at which point the priest, now an ex-priest, shows up, and we hear his version of the events. The truth of what happened to the grownup Ignacio and Enrique emerges in pieces: the three narratives, as they expand and correct one another, become a trio of mirrors producing endless off-angle reflections. The movie asks: Is love possible between men, or is it possible only between innocent boys? In Spanish.—D.D. (11/22/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

CLOSER
Patrick Marber has adapted his own hit play, of the same name, and given the lucky director, Mike Nichols, a script that he can chew on. Some viewers, or listeners, may flinch at the profanity here, or at the level of honesty that demands such profane expression, but peel away the carnal talk and what you are left with—the bone structure of the piece—is not so

different from Noël Coward's "Private Lives." We get two interlocking couples: Dan (Jude Law), a writer who falls in love with Alice (Natalie Portman), a night-club stripper, and Larry (Clive Owen), a doctor who marries a photographer called Anna (Julia Roberts). The transactions are quick and brutal: Dan has anonymous online sex with Larry and a yearlong affair with Anna, Alice leaves Dan and finds work at a club, Larry finds her there and tells her precisely what he wants, and nobody is happy. The film is more civilized than the play, the acid slightly diluted, yet Law, for one, looks eaten away by the bitter pace of it all. Roberts, too, is haunted and pained, whereas Portman and Owen drink and spit their lines with undiminished relish, often at speeds that Nichols can barely handle. Not recommended for couples on a first date.—*A.L.* (12/13/04) (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)



At the World Financial Center Winter Garden, "Battleship Potemkin," with music by the Club Foot Orchestra.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

HOTEL RWANDA

Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Rwandan manager of the four-star Hôtel des Mille Collines, in Kigali, wears a blue suit and tie and is very polite, even deferential, toward everyone. Paul works for the Belgian company that owns the hotel, which has become an oasis for Europeans and for African élites. When the Hutu massacres of the Tutsi minority begin, in the spring of 1994, Paul keeps the Mille Collines running. He also, on the sly, establishes it as a haven for both Hutu and Tutsi fugitives, keeping them momentarily safe from the machete-wielding militia, who kill eight hundred thousand people in a few months. Working in Rwanda and South Africa, the writer-director, Terry George, convincingly stages the horrors outside the hotel: the paralyzing fear in the night, the vilely inciting radio broadcasts, the chaos and arbitrary madness of the slaughter. But the true drama of "Hotel Rwanda" lies in the character of Paul, who is betrayed by the Europeans who formed him but who holds to his belief in civility, right through the worst disasters. The movie is a triumph for Cheadle—he never steps outside the character for emotional grandstanding or easy moralism.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS

Not a sequel to "Hero," the fantastical hit of the summer, but a chance for the same director, Zhang Yimou, to paint the screen red with his luscious and newly invigorated style. In the middle of the ninth century, two regional policemen (Andy Lau and Takeshi Kaneshiro) take on the might of the Flying Daggers, a furtive antigovernment organization. Their first break is to arrest Mei (Ziyi Zhang), a blind dancer who has all sorts of tricks up her sleeves, most of them liable to cut your throat. One cop goes undercover, hoping that Mei can be seduced into revealing the villains' lair. There is an unembarrassed scent of melodrama to all this, as if Zhang's plot had been infected by the excess of his violent ballets—the knives, arrows, kicks, and leaps with which every contest is resolved, and by which the characters demonstrate their respect for one another and their scorn for the laws of physics. At some point, though, the poise falters, and the movie, unlike "Hero," tips into silliness; in the lust to register nothing but beautiful patterns of movement, the claims of logic, political fear, and even love are blithely blown away. In Mandarin.—*A.L.* (12/13/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU

The latest movie from Wes Anderson, after "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums," marks another bid to swim away from the mainstream. Bill Murray plays Steve Zissou, an old-style explorer of the seas, who could easily be a mad American cousin, twice removed, of Jacques Cousteau. Steve has a tall, peculiar wife (Anjelica Huston) and an even taller and more peculiar rival (Jeff Goldblum). The plot, such as it is, concerns the hunting down of a jaguar shark, which has chewed up one of Steve's associates; at the same time, our hero is coping with the appearance of a young man (Owen Wilson) who claims to be his son. This level of weirdness could, in other hands, appear forced and willful, but Anderson seems at ease with his conceits, allowing his cast—which includes Willem Dafoe and, with a ringing British accent, Cate Blanchett—to relax into the demands of deadpan. Hardly anybody here looks young, and we can only guess at the experiences that have aged them, tested them, and cloaked them in Anderson's brand of sadness. Set against that, we get joyous bursts of David Bowie: "Space Oddity," "Rebel Rebel," and other hits, many of them transposed, naturally enough, into Portuguese. With silly, fetching marine animation sequences by Henry Selick.—*A.L.* (1/17/05) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Michael Radford's film of "The Merchant of Venice" stars Al Pacino as Shylock, and the look of him—heavy of tread, eyes darting and wary—defines the encompassing mood. The text has been sliced and pared, and what remains is intimate and sorrowful, as if the characters knew from the start what manner of tribulation they would face. Antonio (Jeremy Irons) seems already to be mourning the loss not just of his ships at sea but of his friend Bassanio (Joseph Fiennes) to the wealthy and marriageable Portia (Lynn Collins). Her early scenes are the weakest in the movie, the comedy of the semi-fantastic sitting uneasily amid the gathering gloom. What Radford does best—and it's a trick he mislaid in the slower niceties of "Il Postino"—is to shove and wheedle the story along, so that the court scene and even the final bickering over marital rings take on the air not merely of patchings-up but of bristling suspense. Much is at stake here, and, to judge by Pacino's burning gaze, the loser, in so villainous a society, is never really in doubt.—*A.L.* (1/3/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and 19th Street East 6.)

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Much of Clint Eastwood's evocative and poetic boxing movie is set in the Hit Pit, a moldy, sweat-stained downtown Los Angeles gym in which crusty veterans train a few serious fighters and many hapless punks. Scrap (Morgan Freeman), an ex-fighter with one functioning eye, works at the gym and exchanges affectionately nasty remarks with the owner, one Frankie Dunn (Eastwood). Against his better judgment, Frankie agrees to take on a tough country woman, Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank), who, not entirely to our surprise, rapidly becomes the hottest fighter in the sordid but lucrative world of women's boxing. The story, adapted by Paul Haggis from F. X. Toole's collection, "Rope Burns," is borderline trite, but the movie has the sweet melancholy of a great jazz piece.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

OCEAN'S TWELVE

This mock caper movie jerks along in the same incoherent style as Steven Soderbergh's 2002 "Full Frontal," which was a mock art movie. Soderbergh and the producer Jerry Weintraub jammed a script by George Nolfi into the "Ocean's Eleven" formula, and the result is a sequel devoted to an insultingly silly premise: Andy Garcia, the Vegas casino owner whom the team ripped off in the first movie, wants his money back, so the boys have to steal other people's money in order to repay him; they then get into a competition with the greatest thief in Europe to lift a Fabergé egg from a Roman museum. Much narrative repetition and dishevelment follow, underlined by inept "spontaneous" camera work. The actors run numbers on each other's heads and hang out at George Clooney's actual villa on Lake Como; Bruce Willis shows up, trying to pretend he's in on the joke, and smirks his way through several awkward scenes. Soderbergh and the rest may be embarrassed by the artificiality of caper movies, but their way of expressing their uneasiness frustrates the audience's desire to enter into a harmless fantasy. In the end, everyone in the movie has fun except the people watching it.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

SPANGLISH

James L. Brooks's ambitious new comedy chokes on an excess of sincerity and guilt. Flor (Paz Vega), a lustrously beautiful Mexican woman, crosses the border with her perfect daughter, Cristina (Shelbie Bruce), and takes a job in a prosperous Los Angeles household headed by John Clasky (Adam Sandler), allegedly the hottest chef in town, and his wife, Deborah (Téa Leoni), an out-of-work designer in a state of thrashing hysteria. Brooks tries to satirize Deborah as a hapless narcissist who means well but gets everything wrong, but from the first scene Leoni hyperventilates so violently that her performance has nowhere to go; she can only repeat herself until she spirals down into exhaustion and tears. Sandler's chef is meant to be a good daddy and a nice fellow, but Sandler gives a slack, sexless, and meandering performance. The movie feels like an expression of white shame: the Claskys come off as generous but undisciplined and careless, whereas the working-class Flor, obsessed with protecting her daughter from corruption and from Anglo culture, is entirely moral and dignified. There are a few funny scenes, but most of the movie is excruciating. With Cloris Leachman, in good form, as Deborah's hard-drinking and hardheaded mother.—*D.D.*

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BRITISH AIRWAYS

(1/10/05) (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

IN GOOD COMPANY
Battery Park 11, Beekman, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS (1/17/05)
Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

MEET THE FOCKERS
Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

SIDEWAYS (10/25/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
MetroTwin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Feb. 13: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Jan. 22 at 1:30 and 4: "Salò" (1975, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian, French, and German). ♦ Jan. 23 at 2: "Un Chant d'Amour" (1950, Jean Genet) and "Querelle" (1982, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ Jan. 23 at 4:30: "Myra Breckinridge" (1970, Mike Sarne). ♦ Jan. 29 at 2: "Psycho" (1960, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Jan. 29 at 4:30: "Putney Swope" (1969, Robert Downey, Sr.). ♦ Jan. 30 at 2: "Belle de Jour" (1967, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Jan. 30 at 4:30: "Pink Flamingos" (1972, John Waters). ♦ Repertory nights. Jan. 22-23 at 6:30: "Weekend" (1967, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Jan. 29-30: "Metropolis" (1927, Fritz Lang). ♦ Martial-arts classics. Jan. 28 at 7:30: "Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon" (1985, Michael Schultz).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—Through Jan. 20: German *Heimatfilm* of the nineteen-fifties. All films are in German. Jan. 19 at 7: "The Farmer's Perjury" (1956, Rudolf Jugert). ♦ Jan. 19 at 9:15: "High Up on the Mountain" (1957, Géza von Bolvary). ♦ Jan. 20 at 7:30: "The Girl of the Moors" (1958, Gustaf Ucicky). ♦ Jan. 20 at 9:30: "Lady Country Doctor" (1958, Paul May). ♦ "Revival Weekend." Jan. 20 at 7 and 9, Jan. 21 at 7 and 9:30, and Jan. 22-23 at 5, 7, and 9: "Empathy" (2003, Amie Siegel). ♦ The films of Stan Brakhage. Jan. 21 at 8: "Dog Star Man" (1961-64). ♦ Jan. 22 at 8: "Anticipation of the Night" and other shorts (1958-63). ♦ Jan. 23 at 6: "Pasht" and other shorts (1965-68). ♦ Jan. 23 at 8: "Songs 1-14" (1964-65). ♦ Jan. 29 at 6: "Songs 15-22" (1965-66). ♦ Jan. 29 at 8: "23rd Psalm Branch" (1966). ♦ Jan. 30 at 4: "Scenes from Under Childhood" (1969-70). ♦ Jan. 30 at 7: "The Weir-Falcon Saga" and other shorts (1970-71). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Jan. 22 at 6: "Quick Billy" (1970, Bruce Baillie). ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: "Mass for the Dakota Sioux" (1964-65, Baillie). ♦ Jan. 28 at 8: Four films by Christopher Maclaine. ♦ The *Onion* Film Series. Jan. 27 at 8: "Ed Wood" (1994, Tim Burton). ♦ A retrospective of the Taiwanese New Wave director Edward Yang. Jan. 28 and Feb. 1 at 7: "Taipei Story" (1985). ♦ Jan. 28 and Feb. 1 at 9:30: "The Terrorizer" (1987). ♦ Jan. 29 at 3: "That Day, on the Beach" (1982). ♦ Jan. 29 at 7: "A Brighter Summer Day" (1991). ♦ Jan. 30 at 3 and Jan. 31 at 9:30: "A Confucian Confusion" (1994). ♦ Jan. 30 at 6 and Jan. 31 at 7: "Mahjong" (1997). ♦ Jan. 30 at 8:30: "Yi Yi" (2000).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Jan. 19-20 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 21-27 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "ItalianAmerican" (1974, Martin Scorsese) and "American Boy" (1978, Scorsese). ♦ Two pre-Hayes Code restorations. Jan. 24 at 2, 5:15, and 8:20: "Baby Face: The Uncut Version" (1933, Alfred E. Green). ♦ Jan. 24 at 3:40, 6:50, and 10: "Two Seconds" (1932, Mervyn LeRoy). ♦ New print. Jan. 28-Feb. 1 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Los Olvidados" (1950, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—A Claire Denis retrospective. All films are in French. Jan. 25 at 12:30 and 6:30: "Claire Denis: La Vagabonde" (1996, Sébastien Lifshitz). ♦ Jan. 25 at 3:30 and 9: "Jacques Rivette: Le Veilleur" (1990). ♦ Feb. 1 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Friday Night" (2002).

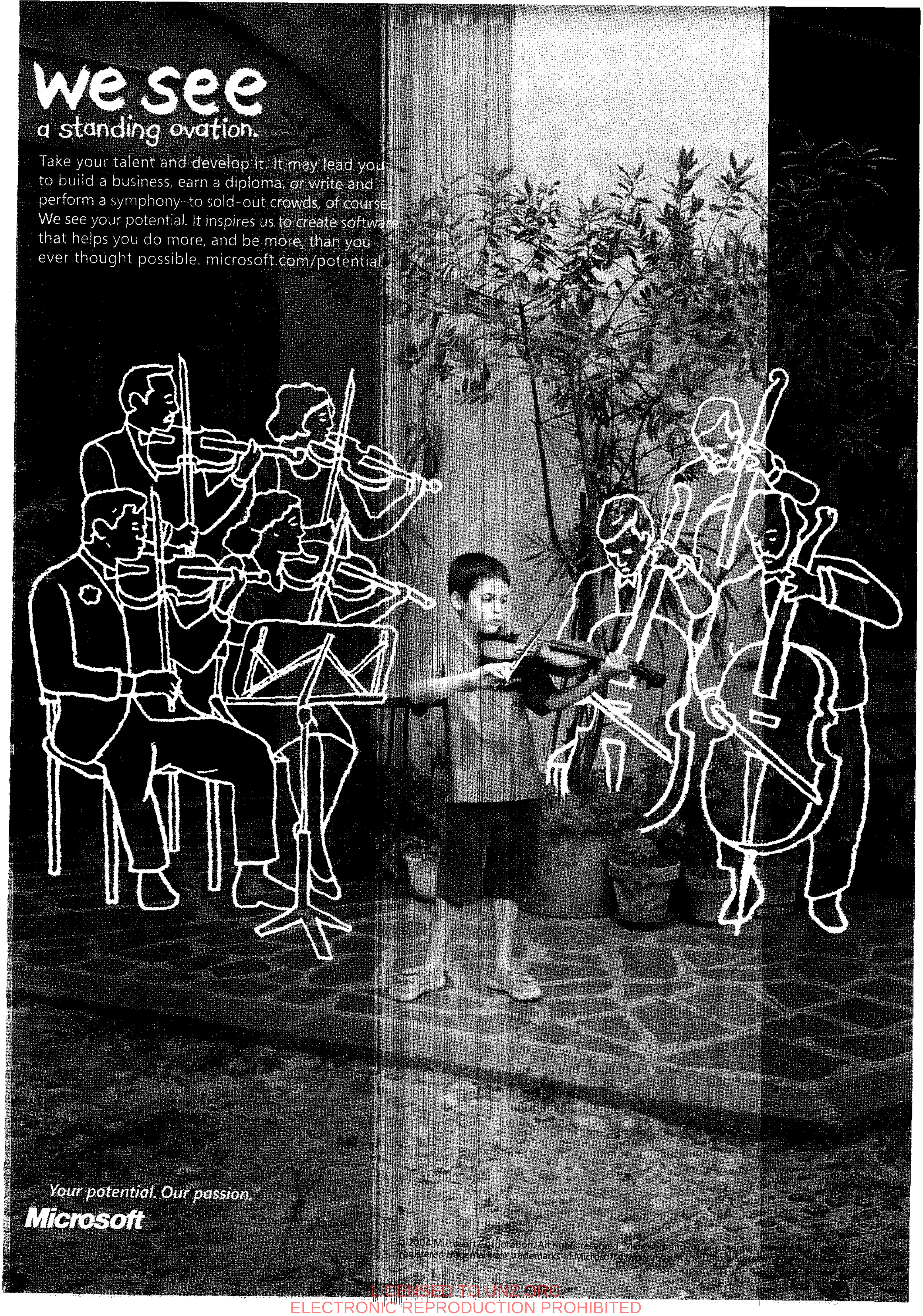
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Jan. 31: "Premières," new films and recent restorations. Jan. 19 at 6: "William Eggleston in the Real World" (2005, Michael Almereyda). ♦ Jan. 19 at 8:30 and Jan. 21 at 7:30: "Rabbit Pix" (2004, James Herbert). ♦ Jan. 20 at 5: "Close Quarters" (2004, Jim Jennings) and two other shorts. ♦ Jan. 20 at 6:15 and Jan. 30 at 2: "Exotica" (1994, Atom Egoyan). ♦ Jan. 20 at 7:30: "Grand Luncheonette" (2004, Peter Sillen) and "I Like Killing Flies" (2003, Matt Mahurin). ♦ Jan. 20 at 8:15: An evening with Kenneth Anger. ♦ Jan. 21 at 5:30: "Sissy Boy Slap Party" (2004, Guy Maddin) and five other shorts. ♦ Jan. 21 at 8: "When It Was Blue" (2005, Jennifer Todd Reeves). ♦ Jan. 22 at 2: "All White People Are French" (2004, Katja Straub) and six other shorts. ♦ Jan. 22 at 3 and Jan. 26 at 6: "Henri Langlois: The Phantom of the Cinémathèque" (2004, Jacques Richard; in French). ♦ Jan. 22 at 7:30 and Jan. 23 at 5: "Blind Husbands" (1919, Erich von Stroheim). ♦ Jan. 22 at 8: "Interstellar Lower East Side Ramble" (2005, Ken Jacobs). ♦ Jan. 23 at 2: "Spy Kids" (2001, Robert Rodriguez). ♦ Jan. 23 at 2:30: "Happy Rebirth" (2004, Bjørn Melhus) and seven other shorts. ♦ Jan. 23 at 5 and Jan. 24 at 8:15: "Dead Man" (1996, Jim Jarmusch). ♦ Jan. 24 at 5 and Jan. 27 at 8:30: "Il Postino" (1994, Michael Radford; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 24 at 8:30 and Jan. 27 at 8: "Heavenly Creatures" (1994, Peter Jackson). ♦ Jan. 26 at 6 and Jan. 28 at 7:45: "Farewell, My Concubine" (1993, Chen Kaige; in Cantonese). ♦ Jan. 27 at 5:30 and Jan. 29 at 2: "The Barbarian Invasions" (2003, Denys Arcand; in French). ♦ Jan. 28 at 5 and Jan. 29 at 8: "Princess Mononoke" (1997, Hayao Miyazaki). ♦ Jan. 28 at 6 and Jan. 29 at 2:30: "Shall We Dance?" (1996, Masayuki Suo; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 28 at 8:15: "Reminiscing in Tempo" (2005, Gary Keys). ♦ Jan. 29 and Jan. 30 at 5: "Chungking Express" (1994, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese). ♦ Jan. 29 at 6:30 and Jan. 31 at 7:30: "The Inner Scar" (1972, Philippe Garrel). ♦ Jan. 29 at 8:30: "White Heat" (1949, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Jan. 30 at 5: "The Girl from Monday" (2005, Hal Hartley). ♦ Jan. 31 at 2:30: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash). ♦ Jan. 31 at 5:30: "Testimony" (2004, Kara Walker) and six other shorts. ♦ "Sundance at MOMA." Jan. 31 at 6:30: "The Immortal" (2004, Mercedes Moncada). ♦ Jan. 31 at 8:30: "Me and You and Everyone We Know" (2004, Miranda July). ♦ "Great Collaborations." Jan. 19 at 8:30: A conversation with Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Jan. 21-22: "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" (2001, John Cameron Mitchell). ♦ Jan. 28-29: "The Princess Bride" (1987, Rob Reiner).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Jan. 25 at 7: "Jules and Jim" (1961, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Jan. 25 at 9:15: "Notre Musique" (2004, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Jan. 27: The New York Jewish Film Festival. Jan. 19 at 12:30 and 8:30 and Jan. 20 at 12:30: "The Mortal Storm" (1940, Frank Borzage). ♦ Jan. 19 at 3: "Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust" (2004, Daniel Anker). ♦ Jan. 19 at 6: "The Pawnbroker" (1964, Sidney Lumet). ♦ Jan. 20 at 3 and 8:30: "Behind Enemy Lines" (2004, Dov Gil-Har). ♦ Jan. 20 at 6 and Jan. 23 at 8:30: "Red Diaper Baby" (2004, Doug Pray). ♦ Jan. 22 at 7, Jan. 23 at 6:30, and Jan. 27 at 6: "Letters from Rishikesh" (2004, Daniel Wachsmann). ♦ Jan. 22 at 9 and Jan. 23 at 2: "Another Road Home" (2004, Danae Elon). ♦ Jan. 23 at 4 and Jan. 25 at 1 and 6: "Tevye" (1939, Maurice Schwartz). ♦ Jan. 25-26 at 3:30: "Shabat" (1991, Gulya Mirzoeva). ♦ Jan. 25 at 8:30: "Rachel, Quand du Seigneur" (2004, Sidney Lumet). ♦ Jan. 26 at 1 and 6 and Jan. 27 at 1: "Poumy" (2004, Sam Ball). ♦ Jan. 26 at 1 and 6 and Jan. 27 at 1: "You Will Never Understand This" (2003, Anja Salomonowitz). ♦ Jan. 26 at 8:30 and Jan. 27 at 3:30 and 8: "Wondrous Oblivion" (2003, Paul Morrison). ♦ Dance on Camera Festival. Jan. 21 at 1: "The Gods of Bali" (1952, Robert Snyder). ♦ Jan. 21 at 3:30: "Mystic Force of Dance." ♦ Jan. 21 at 6:15: "The Red Shoes" (1948, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger). ♦ Jan. 21 at 9: "Tango: A Strange Turn" (2004, Mercedes Garcia Guevara). ♦ Jan. 22 at 1: "New Dance Produced in France." ♦ Jan. 22 at 3:30: "Dune Dance" (1978, Carolyn Brown and Jim Klosty). ♦ Through Feb. 8: "Our Man of the Hour: Sergio Castellitto." All films are in Italian unless otherwise noted. Jan. 28 at 1:30: "The Great Pumpkin" (1993, Francesca Archibugi). ♦ Jan. 28 at 3:45, Jan. 29 at 9:15, and Feb. 1. at 1 and 9: "The Star Maker" (1995, Giuseppe Tornatore). ♦ Jan. 28 at 6:30 and Jan. 30 at 2: "Don't Move" (2004, Castellitto). ♦ Jan. 28 at 9:15 and Jan. 29 at 4:30: "My Mother's Smile" (2002, Marco Bellocchio). ♦ Jan. 29 at 1:30 and Jan. 30 at 7: "Va Savoir" (2001, Jacques Rivette; in French and Italian). ♦ Jan. 29 at 6:45 and Jan. 30 at 4:45: "Caterina in the Big City" (2003, Paolo Virzi).

THE WORLD FINANCIAL CENTER WINTER GARDEN
220 Vesey St. (212-945-0505)—Free screenings of silent films, with new scores composed by Richard Marriott and performed by the Club Foot Orchestra. Jan. 19 at 7: "Legong: Dance of the Virgins" (1935, Henri de la Falaise). ♦ Jan. 20 at 7: "Battleship Potemkin" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein). ♦ Jan. 21 at 7: "The Phantom of the Opera" (1925, Rupert Julian).



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Shade canopy accessories Barrier strips Chalkboards Therapeutic ultrasound PIN photo diode modules Medical monitoring services Check valves Resin systems Chemical oxygen generators All-in-one touch computers Chartering cable ships Elastic bandages Wireless systems Chillers Semiconductor heat sinks Digital audio services Automotive module relays Surface mounted cabinets Rotary switches Flame retardants Pressure seal closures Electric portable air compressors Circuit breakers Automotive quality inspection equipment Solid-state components Gas discharge tube replacements Components for camcorders Panel indicators Firefighter breathing systems Heat isolation devices Climate monitoring Hazardous material protective suits Solid-state subsystems Signal magnetics Passive electronics Medical oxygen delivery Grounding connectors Telescoping sign support systems Broadband driver amplifiers Champagne glasses Drinking bottles Polymeric and porcelain surge arrestors for distribution and transmission networks Automotive power relays Garment hangers Microcoaxial assemblies Snack food packaging Aircraft wire and power cables Modem cable assemblies Industrial control switches Continuous-slot metal framing Landfill development Multi-mode radar Patch cable assemblies Shielded and coaxial cable slices Wine glasses Flame-retardant tape Range hoods Halogen-free cables for commercial and offshore applications Absorbable monofilament sutures Cable TV converters Terminals and connectors for underground networks Syringe dispensers Cordless telephone batteries Fire protection systems Tubing for outdoor furniture framing Sensor wraps Easels PIN diodes High-performance solid state relays and power controllers Wire harness tape Ceramic burners Electrical equipment for saunas Cylindrical control connectors Terminals and splices Security systems Relay sockets and accessories Arson detection Galvanized steel tubing Paperboard Counters and timers Sealed connectors Databus assemblies Television sets DC converters Subcutaneous sensors Pipe and tube products Electrical tape High pass filter inductors Pistol grip hand tool systems for IDCs Adhesive tape Segmentally welded pipe fittings USB cables Construction management Deactivators International mains adaptors Suction instruments Test equipment Steel box connectors Calibration equipment and services Plastic tumblers Cable trays Verified audio detection Thermoplastic piping systems Coaxial cable terminators Pigtail cable assemblies Waveguides Plastics engineering Institutional timekeeping Photocopiers Cabled and blind-mate power connectors High-performance connectors Safety relief valves Access floor modules Halogen-free wire Power systems Raised face flanges Connectors for high-voltage substations Flexible non-metallic conduit Reduced wall flexible metal conduit Catheters Medication nebulizers Digital metering systems Wiring harness sockets Automobile steering columns Pediatric monitoring equipment Cable design conductors Flame-retardant tubing for nuclear environments Roof[illegible]ways Digital products Air sampling equipment Voltage wheels Customized point-of-sale receipts Digital proofing Power tool switches Chokes Medical diagnostics Sound [illegible] traffic control equipment Digital visual interface products Vertical drain membranes and radiant barriers Cabinet power systems Wall track systems DIP switches Resis[illegible] thermostats Electrical transformers High-performance RF/microwave antennas Lighting for public services Video cables Thermal circuit breakers Video endoscopy [illegible] irrigation pipe Heat-tracing connectors Potassium bicarbonate-based extinguishing agents Megaphone components Calculators Institutional can liners Vo[illegible] Wafer gear Varactors Coaxial cables Patient monitoring cables Drop cloths Alarms for hazardous areas Power splitters Chassis components Storm[illegible] card readers with web-based authentication Printer cable assemblies Engineering services Amusement machine components Disposable manual resuscitat[illegible] gas installations Patch panels Airport lighting systems Soldering equipment Long-haul, transoceanic cable systems Entry modules Microsurgical [illegible] ring harness design software Automotive components Computer-assisted design services Porcelain disc insulators Flex and rigid circuits Diagnostic [illegible] Diagnostic and stress testing Landscape plastic sheeting Rechargeable car flashlights Memory card receptacles Spirometry systems Water treatment facilities Coat[illegible] backed building and construction tapes Power magnetics Exhausters Ultraviolet disinfection systems Moisture analysis equipment Flange gaskets with fully elasto[illegible] alloys Professional fire department hardware Custom sterilizable cable assemblies Skin effect trace systems Dental dressings and sutures Parts for lawn and garden [illegible] Tape measures Flame detectors Ribbon cables Carpet backing Parallel groove clamps Graphic arts tape Extended coverage fire sprinkler [illegible] monitoring Satellite radio and digital audio systems Jacket compounds Galvanized steel armor with PVC jackets Irrigation pumps Utility cabinets Cyanoacrylate [illegible] adhesives Large-screen video projectors Eye pads Arterial extension sets Paper mill wraps Fence framework Distribution panels Continuous timers Protective breathing equipment Special purpose spiral antennas Automatic pick, place and press Power toggle switches Fiber-optic connectors Veterinary medical products Bypass valves Carbon dioxide [illegible] transmitters Specialty chemicals Rainfall gauges Alarms for motor vehicles Water sampling and analysis Fingerprint identification Mobile security systems Cable ties Firefig[illegible] flares Multiplier diodes Fireproof cables Drum core magnetics Audio receivers Flexible exhaust connectors Isolators and circulators Magnet wire termination machines Dual hybr[illegible] Static measuring equipment Hand-held radios Cable management accessories Steam-tracing products Extrusion laminating Parking deck PVC jacketed metal clad cable Factory automation cables Steelwork fixings Airport construction management Instrument winterization Cotton balls Pipe for recreational equipment Self-adhesive cable clips Multi-pai high flexibility cables Fixed cable termination adapters Butterfly valves Portable memory Components for CD recorders and players Telemetry systems Audio production services Integrated molding/plating technology Telephone systems Safety goggles Reverse cutting sutures Decorative shields Temperature and pressure gauges Commercial-quality steel tubing Laser diodes Temperature sensors Connection droppers Dry-erase marker boards Feminine hygiene products Storage tanks Analgesics First aid kits Thermal controls Computer-assisted surgery Power modules Subminiature D connectors Front-connected sockets Digital attenuators Automated teller machine components Spring pin [illegible] probe assemblies Control panels Wet pipe sprinkler systems Alarm verification Security keypads Pain management products Helical gears Roadway and tunnel management systems Printed circuit terminals Galvanized round signposts Rocker and paddle switches Microwave components Roof and gutter heating cables Arson detection Voice ampl[illegible] Fall arrest systems High-voltage connectors Power entry modules Custom broadband networks Steel threadable sprinkler pipe Accounting software Ultrasound cable ass[illegible] Protective clothing for emergency workers Flare launchers Dry pipe systems Cable tie guns Broadband amplifiers Rectangular heavy-duty connectors Discharge devices V[illegible]ion dampers Electromagnetic flow readers Laser components Advanced composites Coaxial connectors Adhesive covers Flat steel plates Elastomeric connectors Passive fibe[illegible]ic hardware Singulation systems Electrosurgical devices Coffee service kits Automotive radar sensors Electrical metallic tubing compression connectors and cou[illegible]s Intercommunication devices Customized valves Dry pipe valves Flexible hoses Curing ovens Insulated ground metal clad cables Digital satellite radio antennas Perimeter do[illegible] window protection systems Anemometers Cosmetic surgery needles Flexible non-metallic conduit Supply cylind[illegible] communication systems Identific[illegible] products Flexible piping equipment Rayon balls Dedicated fiber pair monitoring Hardened and tempered steel strip [illegible] detectors Floor-mounted p[illegible] points Specialty electrodes Alcohol preps Fire sprinkler monitoring systems Thermochromic color-changing ink Food service [illegible] cutting sutures Carbon steels Fla[illegible] adaptors PVC conduit and fittings Button battery holder connectors Carbon monoxide protection Environmental data management [illegible] selector switches Biomet[illegible] Frequency response analyzers Thyristor surge protectors Substations Extinguishing powders Contactless position sensors Electrosurgical generators Hospital blankets Modu[illegible] and relays Terminal blocks Painter's plastic Industrial-grade trash bags Signal transducer cable harnesses DIN rail mount sockets Taper point sutures Sand filters Jacketed ca[illegible] Deep-sea cable installations Computer-printable cards Mechanical connectors Attic fire sprinklers Front end rectifiers for wireless applications Sealed [illegible] Components for str[illegible] lighting Fuel dispensing systems Gaffers tape Arterial extension sets Pipe freeze thermal controls Infrastructure antennas Flanged channel posts Intelligent fuses Cardiac blank[illegible] Battery connection cable assemblies Free-height connectors Power relays Custom-printed retail shelf labels Medical packaging Digital signage Sh[illegible] metal fabrication Oxyge[illegible] therapy products Extension cables Liquid bandages Very high-density cable interconnection assemblies Liquid chromatography systems Self-adhesive cable clips Extrusion heat sinks Facility management Lithium batteries Hazardous chemical spill control Vandal-proof photocontrol systems HDTV antennas Inflatable seals Pharmaceuticals LNA amplifiers Resettable devices Distribution compression connectors Specialty polymers Pre-amplifiers Electromechanical relays Cathodic protection Input/output [illegible] assemblies Electrical conduit Videocassette recorder components Disinfectants Filtered modular jacks Hydrologic and hydrographic services General purpose valves [illegible] harsh environment connectors Recycling collection bins Surgical catheters Floor fixings Semiconductor switches Custom heat sinks Delineator posts Medical and surgical sponges Signature capture devices Coplanar connectors Terminal clamps Reversible hydraulic power packs Structural steel tubing for greenhouses Rheostats Germicidal ultraviolet lamps Biomedical engineering Hydraulic controls Aluminum auto parts Composite station post insulators Codeine phosphate Heavy duty starter/battery lugs and connectors Scan converters Couplers Thermal grease Helical rotor pumps Sirens Battery interconnection systems for portable electronics Light rail transportation design and [illegible]eering Automotive semiconductor and magnetic sensors Custom-printed theatrical admission tickets Medical fluid warming systems Ratcheted crimp tools Insp[illegible] microscopes Medical temperature management Power supply distribution units Satellite cables Video endoscopy Digital transmitters Automatic sensors Greenhouse covering Signal PC board relays Microribbon connectors Abrasives Decontamination management services Flocculators Aircraft hangars Spacers and dampers Finite element analysis Definite purpose contactors Wire and cable identification systems Environmental remediation Markers Fire detection systems Aerospace engine parts Cassette recorders GPS receivers High-freque[illegible] connectors Printed circuit boards Wire wrap Extractors Residential concealed fire sprinklers Customized chemicals Telecommunications Frequency synthesizers Precision time clocks Benchtop cut-and-strip machines High-power pulsed laser diodes De-icing thermal controls Flexible steel conduit Steel lugs Energy management consulting Roadway and tunnel construction management Battery terminals Surface skimmers World's largest producer of acetaminophen Interactive video surveillance systems Memory sockets [illegible]e-delay relays and sensors Floor plates Laser-engraved markers Water motor alarms Multipurpose filters for emission control in high-noise industrial environments Switc[illegible]ard wire identification materials Brake master cylinders Insulated lunch bags Plug valves Capacitors Institutional voice evacuation systems Twisted-pair cables Gaseous clea[illegible] Undersea fiber-optic telecommunications Components for DVD players Special hazard protection products Electrosurgical pencils Special shelving and partitions Holiday [illegible]ting controls Pneumatic cylinders for aluminum smelting Cartridge heaters Electronic article surveillance systems Integrated antenna systems Power transistors GPS components Components for home entertainment systems Deluge valves and accessories Perforated telescopic steel tubing Cathode ray tubes Theft, fire, and access control security systems Product disinfection Grating systems Current differential protective relays Scalpels Flood warning systems Computer-printable labels Hose racks Blind-mate hot plugs Antimicrobial dispensers Ruggedized transmitter/receiver modules Safety glasses Composite tension insulators Power cable assemblies for electrosurgical devices Aluminum conduit Skin care products Barricade support legs Electrostatic testing and coating Alkaline batteries Hospital communication systems Cable cutters Video monitors Amplitude/phase-tracking DF antennas Digital indicators Steelwork connection products Rail de-icing systems Hot-rolled steel coils Combustible gas leak detectors Fiberglass support systems and fasteners Shingle and roof underlayments Pitchers Backup power during blackouts Residential and commercial awning framework Aircraft power systems Transmission line arrestors Edge emitting LEDs Gigabit cables Hypodermic syringes Epoxies Firefighting axes Ultrasonic surgical systems Clean room equipment Ice cream sealing wraps Flex film systems Space-qualified components Airport runways and terminals Overvoltage protective relays Identification labeling Water treatment for irrigation Switch mode power magnetics Supermarket packaging Actuation products Premises cabling Attic fire sprinklers High-speed radio frequency circuits Induction loop amplifiers Liquid crystal displ[illegible] pipe Lasers Bonded heatsink assemblies Patchcords Heat detectors Resin-reinforced fiberglass tubing Custom power magnetics Electronic chemicals Delineator posts Si[illegible] heat shrink tubing Air filtration Digital video management systems Food bags Surface wave touchscreens Bacteria filters Dry pipe fire sprinkler valves Wash presses Lightning [illegible]ctors High-power transistor modules Carbon and silver pastes Flat face flanges Geotextiles Laser-based sensors Insulation jackets Recording charts and markers Steel [illegible] for automotive components and fixtures Welding branch outlets Composite wire Gaskets Automotive twin pack relays Multi-conductor network cables Travel mugs Boiler t[illegible]ents Mobile phone interconnections Spark suppressor housings Coated fabrics Forestry tools GPS antennas Internal storage interconnects Reprographics Electrical meta[illegible]ing Telecom and signal relays Weatherproof sealants Portable oxygen units Intrusion alarm detection devices Lighting cable Floodlights for high-security areas Intuitive pla[illegible] Modulators Joysticks Barricade tapes Counters and timers Electronic crowd controlling queue systems Fire hose reel cabinets Keypads Double and quad-ridge wavegu[illegible] Laboratory benches Aerospace ground power and industrial high-performance contactors Extreme temperature flexible metal conduit High speed RF modules Circuit p[illegible] devices Heavy-duty commercial applicators IF amplifiers Automobile battery disconnect switch relays Lecterns and podiums Fabric maintenance Harness adapters Low [illegible]

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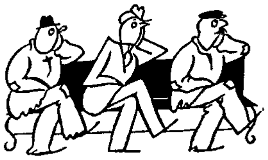
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
UNSOCIAL INSECURITY



The Administration's campaign to do something about, or to, Social Security will get its prime-time launch next month in the State of the Union extravaganza, but President Bush is already busy softening up the battlefield. Last week, he granted his first newspaper interview since the election, to the *Wall Street Journal*, the parish bulletin of the nonevangelical wing of his political base. The first question was about his agenda for Social Security, and whether he would just be laying out general principles and leaving the details to Congress. "No, not necessarily so," he said, adding:

> That's part of—that's part of the advice my new National Economic Council head will be giving me as to whether or not we need to—here is the plan, or here is an idea for a plan, or why don't you just fix it. I suspect given my nature, I'll want to be—the White House will be very much involved with—I have an obligation to lead on this issue—I think this will be an administrative-driven idea—to take it on. And therefore, that that be the case, I have the responsibility to provide the political cover necessary for members, I have the responsibility to make the case if there is a problem, and I have the responsibility to lay out potential solutions. Now, to the specificity of which, we'll find out—you'll find out with time.

Even a professional actuary might have trouble parsing that one. But the initial thrust of the Bush approach—as laid out in his own comments, in speeches and memos by various assistants, and in material put out by groups such as the Alliance for Worker Retirement Security—is clear enough. It has two big themes. First, Social Security is in crisis, running out of money, about to go bankrupt unless something drastic is done. Second, privatization—eliminating part of Social Security and replacing it with a system of individual private investment accounts financed from a portion of workers' payroll taxes—is somehow the key to avoiding the catastrophe, and is also a fine thing in its own right.

"This is one of my charges, is to explain to Congress as clearly as I can: the crisis is now," Bush proclaimed at an "economic summit" a month ago. He does indeed have some 'splaining to do. This year, the Social Security system—the payroll tax, which brings money in, and the pension program, which sends money out—will bring in about $180 billion more than it sends out. It will go on bringing in more than it sends out until 2028, at which point it will begin to draw on the $3.5 trillion surplus it will by then have accumulated. The surplus runs out in 2042, right around the time George W. Bush turns ninety-six. After that, even if nothing has changed, the system's income will continue to cover seventy-three per cent of its outgo.

That's using the Social Security Administration's economic and demographic assumptions, which are habitually pessimistic. Using the assumptions of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the surplus runs out in 2052. And if one uses the economic growth assumptions that Bush's own budget office uses when it calculates the effects of his own tax cuts, the surplus runs out in—er, maybe never.

The "crisis," therefore, is not "now." It's as bogus as the Alliance for Worker Retirement Security—which, in reality, is an "astroturf," or fake-grassroots, front for the National Association of Manufacturers. There is no Social Security crisis, and there is not likely to be one. At some point over the next couple of decades, of course, some adjustments will have to be made. There are many reasonable possibilities: a modest rise in the retirement age, to reflect increases in health and longevity; a rise in the cap on wages

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

subject to the payroll tax, which now cuts out at ninety thousand dollars a year; adding a bit to the progressivity of the benefits. One can even imagine a national decision to devote a larger proportion of national resources to the care of the old, given that a larger proportion of the population will be old—preferably to be paid for by taxing something we'd like to see less of (like fossil-fuel consumption) instead of something we'd like to see more of (like jobs).

Administration spokesmen have been suggesting that privatization will solve Social Security's future financing problems. They're fibbing, though. The much-hyped "crisis" looks suspiciously like the Social Security equivalent of W.M.D.s. This time, though, we have better intelligence. "White House officials privately concede," the *Times* reported last week, "that the centerpiece of Mr. Bush's approach to Social Security—letting people invest some of their payroll taxes in private accounts—would do nothing in itself to eliminate the long-term gap." The Comptroller General of the United States, David M. Walker, agrees. "The creation of private accounts for Social Security," he said in a speech last month, "will not deal with the solvency and sustainability of the Social Security fund." The solvency and sustainability of Social Security, when and if it requires shoring up, will have to be dealt with the old-fashioned way: by increasing revenue and/or reducing guaranteed benefits.

The cynical, or maybe just the political, interpretation of the rush to privatization is that private accounts would, as David Brooks, the *Times*' freshman columnist, wrote the other day, "create Republicans. People who have them will start thinking like investors." (They won't actually *be* investors, not in any meaningful sense—they'll still be workers for hire. But, come election time, they'll take their cue from the Dow, not from wage scales or income gaps or the unemployment rate.) The really cynical explanation is that privatization is a nice, clean way to transfer gigantic sums to Wall Street brokerage houses.

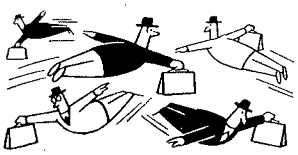
A third explanation—and, who knows, maybe a more accurate one—is that the true impetus to privatization is ideological. To say that is not to say, "How awful!" It's actually a compliment. Ideology is less depraved than crude self-interest, even when it gets you to the same place. And one person's ideology is another person's "values." The values behind Social Security privatization are not terrible. It is good to save. It is good to be self-reliant. It is good to plan ahead. It is good to be the little pig who builds his house of brick rather than straw.

But it's not as if these values were not being taught in hundreds of other ways in our lives. And there are other values, too—values that are suggested by the words "social" and "security." Yes, self-reliance is good; but solidarity is good, too. Looking after yourself is good, but making a firm social decision to banish indigence among the old is also good. Market discipline is good, but it is also good for there to be places where the tyranny of winning and losing does not dominate. Individual choice is good. But making the well-being of the old dependent on the luck or skill of their stock picks or mutual-fund choices is not so good. The idea behind Social Security is not just that old folks should be entitled to comfort regardless of their personal merits. It is that none of us, of any age, should be obliged to live in a society where minimal dignity and the minimal decencies are denied to any of our fellow-citizens at the end of life. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house"—that's a good admonition to keep in mind when making social policy. But so is "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

IN THE AIR

DO-GOODER



Dozing astride seats 62 F, G, and H on Thai Airways flight 775 to Bangkok the other day was a big, bearded man in a blue work shirt with "Red Cross Disaster Services" on the shoulder. His name was Dan Tynon, and this was his third ocean crossing since the tsunami. Tynon is something of a professional disaster volunteer, an unpaid career that started on February 9, 1971, when the Sylmar earthquake destroyed the Olive View hospital, near his house in suburban Los Angeles. A teen-ager at the time, Tynon ran to the site, helping to pull out survivors, and developed a taste for calamity. "It's something you get hooked on," he said, shifting enough to make room for a visitor on one of his seats. He has taken Red Cross disaster classes in such areas as first aid and mass feeding, and has signed up to be on a disaster-availability list. For the past eighteen years, he has done most of his relief work under the auspices of Rotary International, masterminding various clean-water and wheelchair-distribution projects in Thailand.

People who like to speed to the scenes of disasters tend to have jobs they can drop at a moment's notice; Tynon, who is forty-seven years old and lives half of the time in Los Angeles, runs a private-investment fund that trades in municipal debt and pays a small group of investors (minimum investment: fifty thousand dollars), he claims, "between fifteen and eighteen per cent." Managing the fund requires about two weeks of his time every three months. Having once worked as a contractor, he specializes in building-and-repair issues, and he has responded to everything from local fires to Hurricane Andrew and the Northridge earthquake. "What gets to you are the ones like this," he said, "where you can see in people's eyes that they've not only lost all their stuff, they've lost their hope, too."

Tynon was introduced to Thailand three decades ago by a Vietnam-veteran friend who described it as a sensual paradise. "He called me from Bangkok and said, 'Sell whatever you have to, but get here,' " he said. "After about a month of general debauchery, we decided we'd do it every year together. Then he died, but I kept up the tradition." On one such trip, Tynon met a woman in a village near the northern city of Chiang Rai. She already had one child, and they have since had two more, though neither she nor Tynon speaks more than a few words of the other's language. He spends about one week out of every six with them. "It's plenty," he said.

The tsunami hit while he was in L.A. for Christmas. He immediately flew to Thailand and then back to the United States for a Rotary organizational meeting, and was on his way back to Asia with sixty-five thousand dollars in Rotarian-donated cash in his carry-on bag. He was planning to buy tons of rice in the north of

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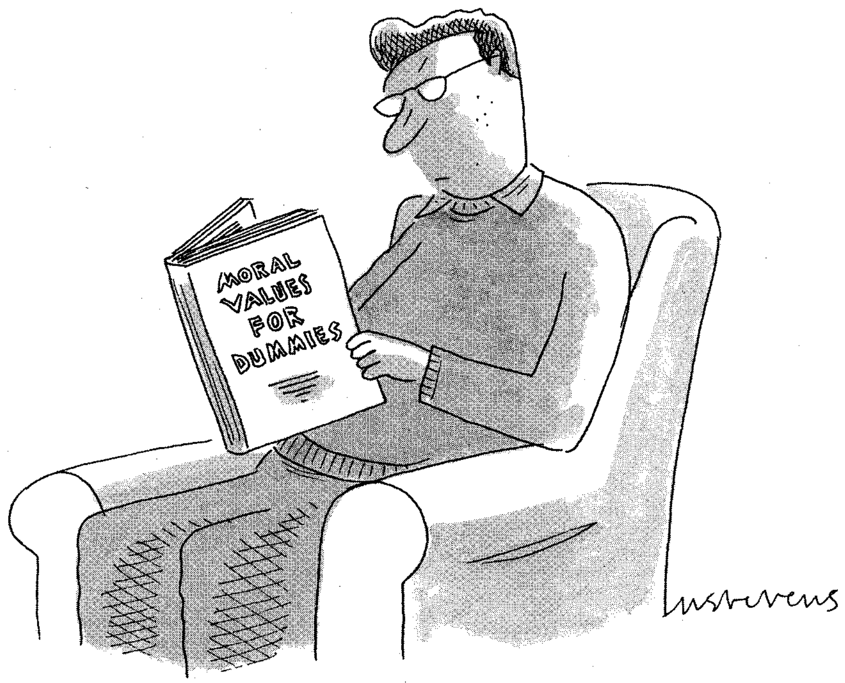
Thailand and then hire forty-eight trucks to haul it for fourteen hours to the towns of Krabi and Phangnga, which were hit hard by the wave. "There's a central distribution center in Chiang Rai where guys with trucks hang out," Tynon said. "I'll just go in there and yell, 'How much for Krabi?' " He also wants to hire some thirty-five-foot boats to take rice out to the islands. "Nothing's really organized," Tynon said. "The Lutherans are sending stuff, the Mormons are sending stuff. You've got planeloads of stuff coming in from every church and N.G.O. you can imagine—food, medicine, clothing that isn't sorted—and they're just throwing it into warehouses. Everybody's doing his own little piece, and eventually something gets to the people who need it."

As Tynon talked, the flight attendants kept bringing him treats—a fresh peach, a plate of chocolate truffles, a fruit tart from first class that appeared to be modelled on the Sydney Opera House. "They know me by now," he explained. "Also, I write children's books and I gave them some." He pulled a stack from his bag. They were written in both English and Thai and dealt with environmental themes. "I've got 'Murray the Manatee,' 'Connie the Condor,' 'Polly the Python,' " he said as he leafed through the thin, bright-colored volumes. "I hate kids, so I'm trying to educate the little bastards."

—*Dan Baum*



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DEPT. OF EDUCATION
SAFE JOURNEY

The world of New York City private schools is often portrayed as a cutthroat, almost Hobbesian place, but there is a tenderhearted side to it as well. These days, community service and sensitivity training are as central to most private-school curricula as math and geography. At Packer Collegiate, in Brooklyn Heights, for instance, the fifth-grade bake sale, which had originally been intended to benefit a less fortunate school in Tanzania, was jointly dedicated to Tanzania and relief for tsunami victims. And when Marco Sylla, the Packer school's security guard, or "hall master," and an Army reservist, was called up for active duty in December, it seemed only natural that the school would offer him the continued use of his Packer laptop, for keeping in touch, and that the Parent Association would buy him a going-away present—an iPod. One upper schooler loaded the device with classic rock, and several dozen students presented Sylla with farewell cards. At a school assembly, he received a two-minute standing ovation.

To some Packer parents, however, this was not appreciation enough. In his two years on the job, Sylla had learned the names of all nine-hundred-odd students. ("He has an aura of authority, but also of gentleness," one mother said.) What's more, his leaving brought the harsh realities of the war in Iraq close to home—even if, for the time being, Sylla's unit has been assigned to Germany. (He shipped out last week.) Lauren Glant, mother of Willy (sixth grade) and Cullen (third grade), remembered reading that some troops had not been adequately supplied with protective gear, so she came up with an idea: to buy Sylla his own suit of body armor.

Glant turned to Michelle Fuchs, another third-grade parent, and the co-chair of the school's diversity and multiculturalism panel, for help with organizing a fund-raising drive. "At first, I said, 'What? I beg your pardon?' " Fuchs recalled the other day. Body armor is a far cry from brownies. Fuchs signed on, and the two mothers sought the help of the Packer head of school, Bruce Dennis, who sent notice of the armoring cause to the school's e-mail-distribution list.

To be sure, there were skeptics. "Who's actually going to purchase the body armor?" one middle-school mother asked. "Somebody said it costs about fifteen hundred dollars. Is that full body armor? Or just a vest?" She added, "From the little bit of research that I did, I thought all the soldiers on the ground in Iraq were actually going to be supplied with body armor now, but maybe that's not true. I don't know."

In the end, generosity prevailed. After one day, the parents had raised twenty-three hundred dollars. A hundred and thirty families have now contributed. And students, too, have chipped in. "Whatever I have left tomorrow after lunch, I'm not going to be spending it this weekend—I've got a busy weekend—so I'm just going to drop it in the folder," a tenth grader named Matt said the other day.

Now comes the hard part: shopping. "The particular kind of armor that's actually being given out by the Army right now is called the Interceptor," Glant explained. The Interceptor Multi-Threat Body Armor System, made of Kevlar, is capable of stopping 7.62-mm. rounds. "They're only selling it to the Army," Glant said. "But there are several different types of body armor that you can get

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either over the Web or at police-supply stores. You know, pretty high-level bulletproof vests. And then there are various inserts and attachments you can get."

The next day, Glant sent a follow-up e-mail: "I am becoming a much greater expert on body armor than I ever anticipated. I can toss around acronyms like O.T.V. and SAPI like a pro (almost)!" O.T.V. stands for Outer Tactical Vest. SAPI stands for Small Arms Protective Inserts.

Fuchs, meanwhile, has been getting advice from three relatives who have military experience. "I got a lot of detail about the difference between a body vest and a bulletproof vest," she said. Her relatives recommended some accessories, too. "Protective gear for his ankles and knees, his wrists and elbows," she said. "If you are engaging in conflict and you need extras, those are the extras."

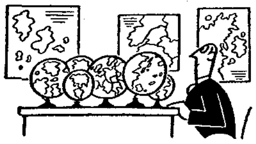
For now, the parents are still awaiting Sylla's measurements, and news of whether he will in fact be stationed in Iraq. If there's any money left over, they plan to provide Sylla with various sundries: phone cards, deodorant, scorpion powder. "I hear that scorpion powder is important to have in Iraq!" Glant said.

Marco Sylla

"You know, in all good will, we just want to inundate him with everything and send him off and hope for the best," Fuchs said. There are, however, limits to the Packer community's benevolence. "If they don't have armored vehicles, we can't help him with that," Fuchs said.

—*Ben McGrath*

POSTCARD FROM THAILAND
SEA GYPSIES



In the province of Phangnga, some five hundred miles south of Bangkok, a temple known as Wat Samakhitham served as a command center in the tsunami relief effort and as a shelter for more than eight hundred people. By the middle of January, only twenty-two families, mostly fishermen, remained on the grounds. Many refugees had been worried that their land, which they did not own but had legally occupied according to a kind of official squatter's rights, might be turned into tourist resorts. Among those who left the temple was a group of about two hundred diminutive indigenous people called the Moken, or Sea Gypsies, who live on the Surin Islands, which are now a national park. The tribe doesn't keep track of birthdays or age, and follows a traditional animist religion. Its small village had been entirely washed away.

The abbot, a former civil engineer, had urged the Sea Gypsies to remain at the temple. "I wanted them to stay longer, so that they could get nationality and education—so they'd have the legal rights of any Thai citizen," he said. But the Sea Gypsies didn't like the mainland. They were also feeling the pressures of publicity, having been turned into a political football in the upcoming general elections. "Save the Moken!" is now a fashionable campaign slogan, and the tribe may well become to the Surin Islands what grizzlies are to Yellowstone.

The Sea Gypsies decided to leave when the wife of a prominent politician came by the temple and offered to send them home, although there were no provisions for food or shelter on the islands. (CARE Thailand has donated material to rebuild their huts, but the work had not yet begun.) Against the abbot's advice, most of the clan boarded chartered tourist boats and crossed forty miles of open water. When they got home, they found that everything—battery-powered televisions, stoves, boats—had been swept out to sea. The Moken themselves survived only because they had fled en masse to higher ground.

In the days immediately after the wave, the Thai papers had reported that there was a secret Moken legend about tsunamis, passed down from generation to generation: when the ocean recedes and the fish flop around, you know a huge wave is coming. But when the returnees were asked about this bit of folklore they seemed perplexed.

"We just saw the wave coming and ran," a garrulous older woman named Misia Klah Talay said. She had just got out of a longboat and was stepping carefully over broken coral to the shore. She wore a pair of shorts covered with Teddy bears that read "Hot Bear," a purple-flowered bra, and a pink rhinestone ring, and she carried an empty black leather purse—items that had all been acquired from aid groups onshore. "If we hadn't run, it would have been the end of our civilization," she said. The clan had huddled at the top of a cliff without food or water until the Park Service sent a boat to fetch them the next day. Each of them received about twelve dollars from the government, but most, like Misia, had already spent it (she bought food for her niece and nephew, with whom she lives).

Misia said she considers herself a widow, since a relationship with an anthropologist who had come to study the Moken ended several years ago. "I was five months pregnant and lost my child," she said. "So he left because he didn't want to live here anymore."

For the past five years, Misia said, the government has encouraged the Moken to give up harvesting sea cucumbers and sell handicrafts to the tourists instead. She held up a basket that she was trying to sell for about a dollar. "If the foreigners don't buy them, it looks bad on their name," she said with a grin. But it may be months before any tourists come back. Meanwhile, the Sea Gypsies will sleep next to the Park Service's offices, under plastic awnings like the ones you see at used-car lots.

Nearby, the rest of the Sea Gypsies sat looking at the devastated cove. Many of the Moken were wearing copper amulets around their necks depicting the Buddha—gifts from the abbot, who had lectured them on the Buddha's teachings—but no one could remember who the man on the pendant was. Misia didn't have one on. "I didn't want one," she said. "I like gold."

—*Eliza Griswold*

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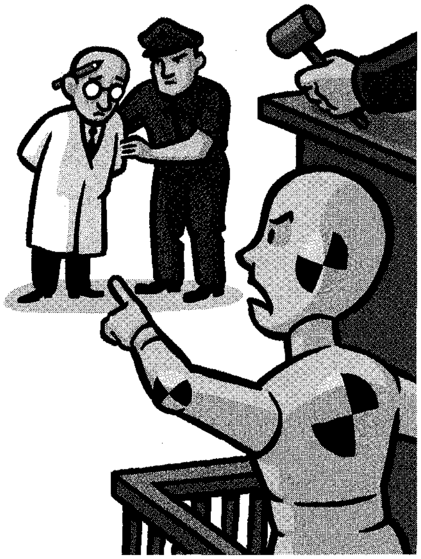
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
DON'T DO THE MATH

In the business world, bad news is usually good news—for somebody else. Ever since Merck announced, this past fall, that the pain reliever Vioxx could be linked to an increased risk of strokes or heart attacks, ads from lawyers trolling for potential plaintiffs ("Hire a Texas Vioxx lawyer," "Vioxx injury claims") have become ubiquitous on the Internet and cable television. Merck is already defending itself against almost five hundred lawsuits, and the number is expected to soar in the next few months. One Wall Street analyst has estimated that the company could face a total bill of more than fifty billion dollars. The impending parade of jury verdicts and out-of-court settlements may render a kind of rough justice. But you may not realize just how rough.

In recent years, juries have become more willing to punish corporate offenders by issuing immense damage awards. According to the Harvard law professor W. Kip Viscusi, more than half of all "blockbuster awards"—those totalling more than a hundred million dollars—have been decided since 1999. The system that produces these awards is often perplexingly arbitrary. Where a case is tried, for instance, can have an enormous effect on how much a company ends up paying. (Two states, Texas and California, have been responsible for almost half of all blockbuster awards.) Nor is the level of scientific rigor in such cases always high: litigation over silicone breast implants cost Dow Corning $2.3 billion and forced it into bankruptcy even though the implants have never been proved to cause immune disorders, as plaintiffs alleged.

Merck would seem to have one big thing in its favor: the company voluntarily withdrew Vioxx from the market. But while Merck executives may have hoped to persuade people that they were acting responsibly, plaintiffs' attorneys have taken the withdrawal as an admission of guilt. Questions about Vioxx's potential risks have been common since its introduction, six years ago, especially after a 2000 trial suggested that the drug increased the risk of heart disease. Merck did not hide these data, and beginning in 2002 the drug's label included a warning about the possible cardiovascular risks. Some critics, however, have suggested that the company soft-pedalled the dangers. Internal company documents show that Merck employees were debating the safety of the drug for years before the recall.

From a scientific perspective, this is hardly damning. The internal debates about the drug's safety were just that—debates, with different scientists arguing for and against the drug. The simple fact that Vioxx might have risks wasn't reason to recall it, since the drug also had an important benefit: it was less likely to cause the internal bleeding that aspirin and ibuprofen cause, and that kills thousands of people a year. And there's no clear evidence that Merck kept selling Vioxx after it decided that the drug's dangers outweighed its benefits.



While that kind of weighing of risk and benefit may be medically rational, in the legal arena it's poison. Nothing infuriates juries like finding out that companies knew about dangers and then "balanced" them away. In fact, any kind of risk-benefit analysis, honest or not, is likely to get you in trouble with juries. In 1999, for instance, jurors in California ordered General Motors to pay $4.8 billion to people who were injured when the gas tank in their 1979 Chevrolet Malibu caught fire. The jurors made it plain that they did so because G.M. engineers had calculated how much it would cost to move the gas tank (which might have made the car safer). Viscusi has shown that people are inclined to award heftier punitive damages against a company that had performed a risk analysis before selling a product than a company that didn't bother to. Even if the company puts a very high value on each life, the fact that it has weighed costs against benefits is, in itself, reprehensible. "We're just numbers, I feel, to them" is how a juror in the G.M. case put it. "Statistics. That's something that is wrong."

In everyday life, of course, we're always making trade-offs between safety and things like cost or convenience. There's not a car on the road that couldn't be made safer, if you didn't care about looks, mileage, cost, and so on. It's just that the trade-offs we make are seldom explicit: we don't tell ourselves that a sixty-five-mile-an-hour speed limit means a certain number of extra deaths, that buying this car instead of that car will affect our life expectancy—and, as individuals, we often don't see the costs. In the courtroom, the calculations can be seen in all their cold rationality, and the costs are vividly embodied. Before a jury, then, a firm is better off being ignorant than informed.

Obviously, there's something wrong with a system that discourages the careful weighing of costs against benefits—we want companies to learn as much as they can about the downsides of their products. But companies like Merck, which spend hundreds of millions on ads targeting consumers, have themselves to blame, too. Instead of getting people to think about drugs in terms of costs and benefits, these ads encourage people to think of medicine in the same way they think of other consumer goods. It would be one thing if Merck had marketed Vioxx only to people who really needed it—people who couldn't take ibuprofen or aspirin safely. Instead, the company marketed it aggressively to everyone, so that some twenty million Americans had Vioxx prescriptions. That's why the potential damages against Merck are so vast. If juries have a hard time accepting a risk-benefit trade-off when it comes to drugs, it's in part because the drug companies have convinced them that no such trade-off has to be made.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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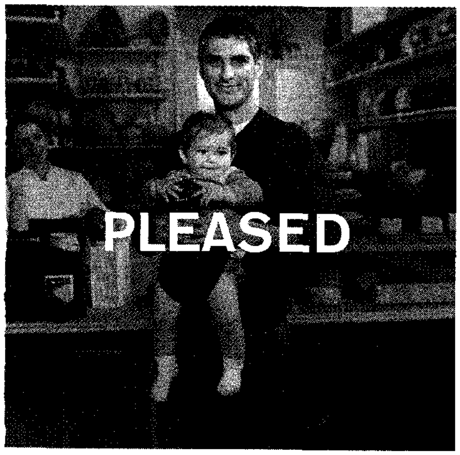

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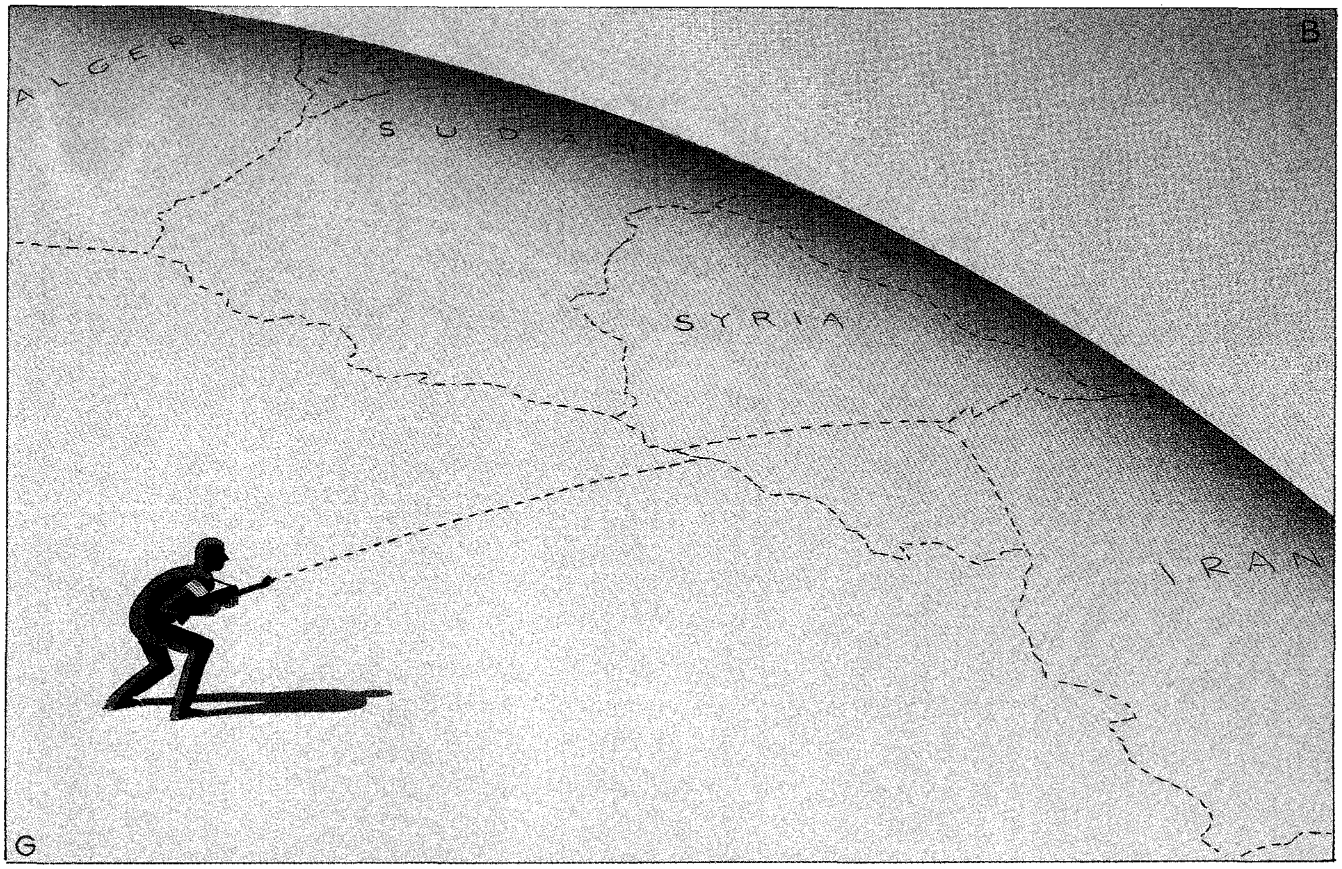
ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE COMING WARS

What the Pentagon can now do in secret.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

George W. Bush's reëlection was not his only victory last fall. The President and his national-security advisers have consolidated control over the military and intelligence communities' strategic analyses and covert operations to a degree unmatched since the rise of the post-Second World War national-security state. Bush has an aggressive and ambitious agenda for using that control—against the mullahs in Iran and against targets in the ongoing war on terrorism—during his second term. The C.I.A. will continue to be downgraded, and the agency will increasingly serve, as one government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon put it, as "facilitators" of policy emanating from President Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney. This process is well under way.



"It's a finesse to give power to Rumsfeld," an adviser said of the Pentagon's new covert authority. "It's a global free-fire zone."

GUY BILLOUT

Despite the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, the Bush Administration has not reconsidered its basic long-range policy goal in the Middle East: the establishment of democracy throughout the region. Bush's reëlection is regarded within the Administration as evidence of America's support for his decision to go to war. It has reaffirmed the position of the neoconservatives in the Pentagon's civilian leadership who advocated the invasion, including Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Douglas Feith, the Under-secretary for Policy. According to a former high-level intelligence official, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff shortly after the election and told them, in essence, that the naysayers had been heard and the American people did not accept their message. Rumsfeld added that America was committed to staying in Iraq and that there would be no second-guessing.

"This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign. The Bush Administration is looking at this as a huge war zone," the former high-level intelligence official told me. "Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign. We've declared war and the bad guys, wherever they are, are the enemy. This is the last hurrah—we've got four years, and want to come out of this saying we won the war on terrorism."

Bush and Cheney may have set the policy, but it is Rumsfeld who has directed its implementation and has absorbed much of the public criticism when things went wrong—whether it was prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib or lack of sufficient armor plating for G.I.s' vehicles in Iraq. Both Democratic and Republican lawmakers have called for Rumsfeld's dismissal, and he is not widely admired inside the military. Nonetheless, his reappointment as Defense Secretary was never in doubt.

Rumsfeld will become even more important during the second term. In interviews with past and present intelligence and military officials, I was told that the agenda had been determined before the Presidential election, and much of it would be Rumsfeld's responsibility. The war on terrorism would be expanded, and effectively placed under the Pentagon's control. The President has signed a series of findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as ten nations in the Middle East and South Asia.

The President's decision enables Rumsfeld to run the operations off the books—free from legal restrictions imposed on the C.I.A. Under current law, all C.I.A. covert activities overseas must be authorized by a Presidential finding and reported to the Senate and House intelligence committees. (The laws were enacted after a series of scandals in the nineteen-seventies involving C.I.A. domestic spying and attempted assassinations of foreign leaders.) "The Pentagon doesn't feel obligated to report any of this to Congress," the former high-level intelligence official said. "They don't even call it 'covert ops'—it's too close to the C.I.A. phrase. In their view, it's 'black reconnaissance.' They're not even going to tell the CINCs"—the regional American military commanders-in-chief. (The Defense Department and the White House did not respond to requests for comment on this story.)

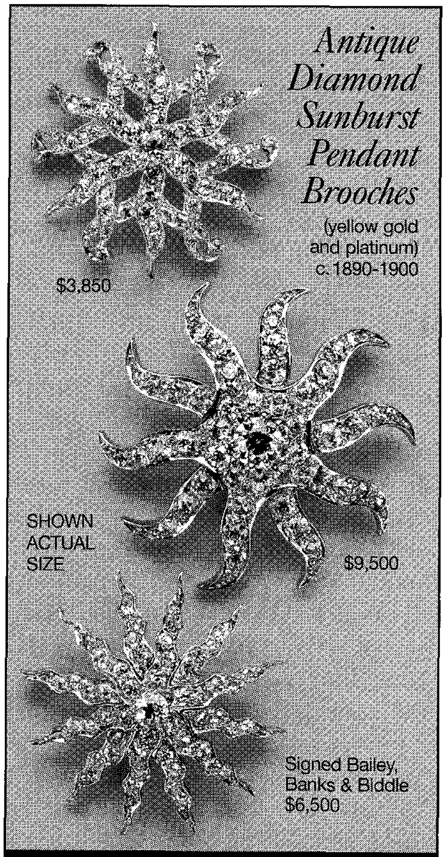
In my interviews, I was repeatedly told that the next strategic target was Iran. "Everyone is saying, 'You can't be serious about targeting Iran. Look at Iraq,'" the former intelligence official told me. "But they say, 'We've got some lessons learned—not militarily, but how we did it politically. We're not going to rely on agency pissants.' No loose ends, and that's why the C.I.A. is out of there."

For more than a year, France, Germany, Britain, and other countries in the European Union have seen preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon as a race against time—and against the Bush Administration. They have been negotiating with the Iranian leadership to give up its nuclear-weapons ambitions in exchange for economic aid and trade benefits. Iran has agreed to temporarily halt its enrichment programs, which generate fuel for nuclear power plants but also could produce weapons-grade fissile material. (Iran claims that such facilities are legal under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or N.P.T., to which it is a signator, and that it has no intention of building a bomb.) But the goal of the current round of talks, which began in December in Brussels, is to persuade Tehran to go further, and dismantle its machinery. Iran insists, in return, that it needs to see some concrete benefits from the Europeans—oil-production technology, heavy-industrial equipment, and perhaps even permission to purchase a fleet of Airbuses. (Iran has been denied access to technology and many goods owing to sanctions.)

The Europeans have been urging the Bush Administration to join in these negotiations. The Administration has refused to do so. The civilian leadership in the Pentagon has argued that no diplomatic progress on the Iranian nuclear threat will take place unless there is a credible threat of military action. "The neocons say negotiations are a bad deal," a senior official of the International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.) told me. "And the only thing the Iranians understand is pressure. And that they also need to be whacked."

The core problem is that Iran has successfully hidden the extent of its nuclear program, and its progress. Many Western intelligence agencies, including those of the United States, believe that Iran is at least three to five years away from a capability to independently produce nuclear warheads—although its work on a missile-delivery system is far more advanced. Iran is also widely believed by Western intelligence agencies and the I.A.E.A. to have serious technical problems with its weapons system, most notably in the production of the hexafluoride gas needed to fabricate nuclear warheads.

A retired senior C.I.A. official, one of many who left the agency recently, told me that he was familiar with the assessments, and confirmed that Iran is known to be having major difficulties in



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its weapons work. He also acknowledged that the agency's timetable for a nuclear Iran matches the European estimates—assuming that Iran gets no outside help. "The big wild card for us is that you don't know who is capable of filling in the missing parts for them," the recently retired official said. "North Korea? Pakistan? We don't know what parts are missing."

One Western diplomat told me that the Europeans believed they were in what he called a "lose-lose position" as long as the United States refuses to get involved. "France, Germany, and the U.K. cannot succeed alone, and everybody knows it," the diplomat said. "If the U.S. stays outside, we don't have enough leverage, and our effort will collapse." The alternative would be to go to the Security Council, but any resolution imposing sanctions would likely be vetoed by China or Russia, and then "the United Nations will be blamed and the Americans will say, 'The only solution is to bomb.' "

A European Ambassador noted that President Bush is scheduled to visit Europe in February, and that there has been public talk from the White House about improving the President's relationship with America's E.U. allies. In that context, the Ambassador told me, "I'm puzzled by the fact that the United States is not helping us in our program. How can Washington maintain its stance without seriously taking into account the weapons issue?"

The Israeli government is, not surprisingly, skeptical of the European approach. Silvan Shalom, the Foreign Minister, said in an interview last week in Jerusalem, with another *New Yorker* journalist, "I don't like what's happening. We were encouraged at first when the Europeans got involved. For a long time, they thought it was just Israel's problem. But then they saw that the [Iranian] missiles themselves were longer range and could reach all of Europe, and they became very concerned. Their attitude has been to use the carrot and the stick—but all we see so far is the carrot." He added, "If they can't comply, Israel cannot live with Iran having a nuclear bomb."

In a recent essay, Patrick Clawson, an Iran expert who is the deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (and a supporter of the Administration), articulated the view that force, or the threat of it, was a vital bargaining tool with Iran. Clawson wrote that if Europe wanted coöperation with the Bush Administration it "would do well to remind Iran that the military option remains on the table." He added that the argument that the European negotiations hinged on Washington looked like "a preëmptive excuse for the likely breakdown of the E.U.-Iranian talks." In a subsequent conversation with me, Clawson suggested that, if some kind of military action was inevitable, "it would be much more in Israel's interest—and Washington's—to take covert action. The style of this Administration is to use overwhelming force—'shock and awe.' But we get only one bite of the apple."

"When this is all done, I'd like to try something a little different. Maybe work with children."

There are many military and diplomatic experts who dispute the notion that military action, on whatever scale, is the right approach. Shahram Chubin, an Iranian scholar who is the director of research at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, told me, "It's a fantasy to think that there's a good American or Israeli military option in Iran." He went on, "The Israeli view is that this is an international problem. 'You do it,' they say to the West. 'Otherwise, our Air Force will take care of it.' " In 1981, the Israeli Air Force destroyed Iraq's Osirak reactor, setting its nuclear program back several years. But the situation now is both more complex and more dangerous, Chubin said. The Osirak bombing "drove the Iranian nuclear-weapons program underground, to hardened, dispersed sites," he said. "You can't be sure after an attack that you'll get away with it. The U.S. and Israel would not be certain whether all the sites had been hit, or how quickly they'd be rebuilt. Meanwhile, they'd be waiting for an Iranian counter-attack that could be military or terrorist or diplomatic. Iran has long-range missiles and ties to Hezbollah, which has drones—you can't begin to think of what they'd do in response."

Chubin added that Iran could also renounce the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. "It's better to have them cheating within the system," he said. "Otherwise, as victims, Iran will walk away from the treaty and inspections while the rest of the world watches the N.P.T. unravel before their eyes."

The Administration has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions inside Iran at least since last summer. Much of the focus is on the accumulation of intelligence and targeting information on Iranian nuclear, chemical, and missile sites, both declared and suspected. The goal is to identify and isolate three dozen, and perhaps more, such targets that could be destroyed by precision strikes and short-term commando raids. "The civilians in the Pentagon want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible," the government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon told me.

Some of the missions involve extraordinary coöperation. For example, the former high-level intelligence official told me that an American commando task force has been set up in South Asia and is now working closely with a group of Pakistani scientists and technicians who had dealt with Iranian counterparts. (In 2003, the I.A.E.A. disclosed that Iran had been secretly receiving nuclear technology from Pakistan for more than a decade, and had withheld that information from inspectors.) The American task force, aided by the information from Pakistan, has been penetrating eastern Iran from Afghanistan in a hunt for underground installations. The task-force members, or their locally recruited agents, secreted remote detection devices—known as sniffers—capable of sampling the atmosphere for radioactive emissions and other evidence of nuclear-enrichment programs.

Getting such evidence is a pressing concern for the Bush Administration. The former high-level intelligence official told me, "They don't want to make any W.M.D. intelligence mistakes, as in Iraq. The Republicans can't have two of those. There's no education in the second kick of a mule." The official added that the government of Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani President, has won a high price for its coöperation—American assurance that Pakistan will not have to hand over A. Q. Khan, known as the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, to the I.A.E.A. or to any other international authorities for questioning. For two decades, Khan has been linked to a vast consortium of nuclear-black-market activities. Last year, Musharraf professed to be shocked when Khan, in the face of overwhelming evidence, "confessed" to his activities. A few days later, Musharraf pardoned him, and so far he has refused to allow the I.A.E.A. or American intelligence to interview him. Khan is now said to be living under house arrest in a villa in Islamabad. "It's a deal—a trade-off," the former high-level intelligence official explained. " 'Tell us what you know about Iran and we will let your A. Q. Khan guys go.' It's the neoconservatives' version of short-term gain at long-term cost. They want to prove that Bush is the anti-terrorism guy who can handle Iran and the nuclear threat, against the long-term goal of eliminating the black market for nuclear proliferation."

The agreement comes at a time when Musharraf, according to a former high-level Pakistani diplomat, has authorized the expansion of Pakistan's nuclear-weapons arsenal. "Pakistan still needs parts and supplies, and needs to buy them in the clandestine market," the former diplomat said. "The U.S. has done nothing to stop it."

There has also been close, and largely unacknowledged, coöperation with Israel. The government consultant with ties to the Pentagon said that the Defense Department civilians, under the leadership of Douglas Feith, have been working with Israeli planners and consultants to develop and refine potential nuclear, chemical-weapons, and missile targets inside Iran. (After Osirak, Iran situated many of its nuclear sites in remote areas of the east, in an attempt to keep them out of striking range of other countries, especially Israel. Distance no longer lends such protection, however: Israel has acquired three submarines capable of launching cruise missiles and has equipped some of its aircraft with additional fuel tanks, putting Israeli F-16I fighters within the range of most Iranian targets.)

"They believe that about three-quarters of the potential targets can be destroyed from the air, and a quarter are too close to population centers, or buried too deep, to be targeted," the consultant said. Inevitably, he added, some suspicious sites need to be checked out by American or Israeli commando teams—in on-the-ground surveillance—before being targeted.

The Pentagon's contingency plans for a broader invasion of Iran are also being updated. Strategists at the headquarters of the U.S. Central Command, in Tampa, Florida, have been asked to revise the military's war plan, providing for a maximum ground and air invasion of Iran. Updating the plan makes sense, whether or not the Administration intends to act, because the geopolitics of the region have changed dramatically in the last three years. Previously, an American invasion force would have had

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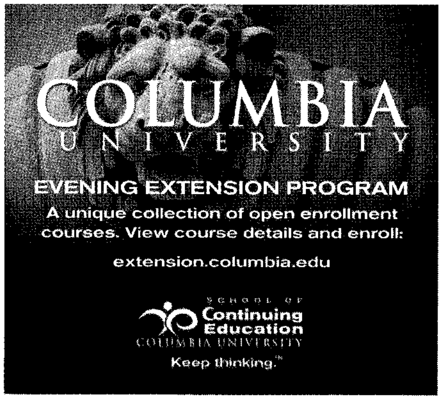

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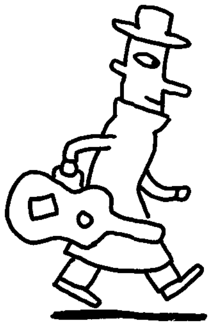
to enter Iran by sea, by way of the Persian Gulf or the Gulf of Oman; now troops could move in on the ground, from Afghanistan or Iraq. Commando units and other assets could be introduced through new bases in the Central Asian republics.

It is possible that some of the American officials who talk about the need to eliminate Iran’s nuclear infrastructure are doing so as part of a propaganda campaign aimed at pressuring Iran to give up its weapons planning. If so, the signals are not always clear. President Bush, who after 9/11 famously depicted Iran as a member of the “axis of evil,” is now publicly emphasizing the need for diplomacy to run its course. “We don’t have much leverage with the Iranians right now,” the President said at a news conference late last year. “Diplomacy must be the first choice, and always the first choice of an administration trying to solve an issue of . . . nuclear armament. And we’ll continue to press on diplomacy.”

In my interviews over the past two months, I was given a much harsher view. The hawks in the Administration believe that it will soon become clear that the Europeans’ negotiated approach cannot succeed, and that at that time the Administration will act. “We’re not dealing with a set of National Security Council option papers here,” the former high-level intelligence official told me. “They’ve already passed that wicket. It’s not *if* we’re going to do anything against Iran. They’re doing it.”

The immediate goals of the attacks would be to destroy, or at least temporarily derail, Iran’s ability to go nuclear. But there are other, equally purposeful, motives at work. The government consultant told me that the hawks in the Pentagon, in private discussions, have been urging a limited attack on Iran because they believe it could lead to a toppling of the religious leadership. “Within the soul of Iran there is a struggle between secular nationalists and reformers, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the fundamentalist Islamic movement,” the consultant told me. “The minute the aura of invincibility which the mullahs enjoy is shattered, and with it the ability to hoodwink the West, the Iranian regime will collapse”—like the former Communist regimes in Romania, East Germany, and the Soviet Union. Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz share that belief, he said.



“The idea that an American attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities would produce a popular uprising is extremely ill-informed,” said Flynt Leverett, a Middle East scholar who worked on the National Security Council in the Bush Administration. “You have to understand that the nuclear ambition in Iran is supported across the political spectrum, and Iranians will perceive attacks on these sites as attacks on their ambitions to be a major regional player and a modern nation that’s technologically sophisticated.” Leverett, who is now a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, at the Brookings Institution, warned that an American attack, if it takes place, “will produce an Iranian backlash against the United States and a rallying around the regime.”

Rumsfeld planned and lobbied for more than two years before getting Presidential authority, in a series of findings and executive orders, to use military commandos for covert operations. One of his first steps was bureaucratic: to shift control of an undercover unit, known then as the Gray Fox (it has recently been given a new code name), from the Army to the Special Operations Command (SOCOM), in Tampa. Gray Fox was formally assigned to SOCOM in July, 2002, at the instigation of Rumsfeld’s office, which meant that the undercover unit would have a single commander for administration and operational deployment. Then, last fall, Rumsfeld’s ability to deploy the commandos expanded. According to a Pentagon consultant, an Execute Order on the Global War on Terrorism (referred to throughout the government as GWOT) was issued at Rumsfeld’s direction. The order specifically authorized the military “to find and finish” terrorist targets, the consultant said. It included a target list that cited Al Qaeda network members, Al Qaeda senior leadership, and other high-value targets. The consultant said that the order had been cleared throughout the national-security bureaucracy in Washington.

In late November, 2004, the *Times* reported that Bush had set up an inter-agency group to study whether it “would best serve the nation” to give the Pentagon complete control over the C.I.A.’s own élite paramilitary unit, which has operated covertly in trouble spots around the world for decades. The panel’s conclusions, due in February, are foregone, in the view of many former C.I.A. officers. “It seems like it’s going to happen,” Howard Hart, who was chief of the C.I.A.’s Paramilitary Operations Division before retiring in 1991, told me.

There was other evidence of Pentagon encroachment. Two former C.I.A. clandestine officers, Vince Cannistraro and Philip Giraldi, who publish *Intelligence Brief,* a newsletter for their business clients, reported last month on the existence of a broad counter-terrorism Presidential finding that permitted the Pentagon “to operate unilaterally in a number of countries where there is a perception of a clear and evident terrorist threat. . . . A number of the countries are friendly to the U.S. and are major trading partners. Most have been cooperating in the war on terrorism.” The two former officers listed some of the countries—Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Malaysia. (I was subsequently told by the former high-level intelligence official that Tunisia is also on the list.)

Giraldi, who served three years in military intelligence before joining the C.I.A., said that he was troubled by the military’s expanded covert assignment. “I don’t think they can handle the cover,” he told me. “They’ve got to have a different mind-set. They’ve got to handle new roles and get into foreign cultures and learn how other people think. If you’re going into a village and shooting people, it doesn’t matter,” Giraldi added. “But if you’re running operations that involve finesse and sensitivity, the military can’t do it. Which is why these kind of operations were always run out of the agency.” I was told that many Special Operations officers also have serious misgivings.

Rumsfeld and two of his key deputies, Stephen Cambone, the Under-secretary of Defense for Intelligence, and Army Lieutenant General William G. (Jerry) Boykin, will be part of the chain of command for the new commando operations. Relevant members of the House and Senate intelligence committees have been briefed on the Defense Department’s expanded role in covert affairs, a Pentagon adviser assured me, but he did not know how extensive the briefings had been.

“I’m conflicted about the idea of operating without congressional oversight,” the Pentagon adviser said. “But I’ve been told that there will be oversight down to the specific operation.” A second Pentagon adviser agreed, with a significant caveat. “There are reporting requirements,” he said. “But to execute the finding we don’t have to go back and say, ‘We’re going here and there.’ No nitty-gritty detail and no micromanagement.”

The legal questions about the Pentagon’s right to conduct covert operations without informing Congress have not been resolved. “It’s a very, very gray area,” said Jeffrey H. Smith, a West Point graduate who served as the C.I.A.’s general counsel in the mid-nineteen-nineties. “Congress believes it voted to include all such covert activities carried out by the armed forces. The military says, ‘No, the things we’re doing are not intelligence actions under the statute but necessary military steps authorized by the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to “prepare the battlefield.” ’ ” Referring to his days at the C.I.A., Smith added, “We were always careful not to use the armed forces in a covert action without a Presidential finding. The Bush Administration has taken a much more aggressive stance.”

In his conversation with me, Smith emphasized that he was unaware of the military’s current plans for expanding covert action. But he said, “Congress has always worried that the Pentagon is going to get us involved in some military misadventure that nobody knows about.”

Under Rumsfeld’s new approach, I was told, U.S. military operatives would be permitted to pose abroad as corrupt foreign businessmen seeking to buy contraband items that could be used in nuclear-weapons systems. In some cases, according to the Pentagon advisers, local citizens could be recruited and asked to join up with guerrillas or terrorists. This could potentially involve organizing and carrying out combat operations, or even terrorist activities. Some operations will likely take place in nations in which there is an American diplomatic mission, with an Ambassador and a C.I.A. station chief, the Pentagon consultant said. The Ambassador and the station chief would not necessarily have a need to know, under the Pentagon’s current interpretation of its reporting requirement.

The new rules will enable the Special Forces community to set up what it calls “action teams” in the target countries overseas which can be used to find and eliminate terrorist organizations. “Do you remember the right-wing execution squads in El Salvador?” the former high-level intelligence official asked me, referring to the military-led gangs that committed atrocities in the early nineteen-eighties. “We founded them and we financed them,” he said. “The objective now is to recruit locals in any area we want. And we aren’t going to tell Congress about it.” A former military officer, who has knowledge of the Pentagon’s commando capabilities, said, “We’re going to be riding with the bad boys.”

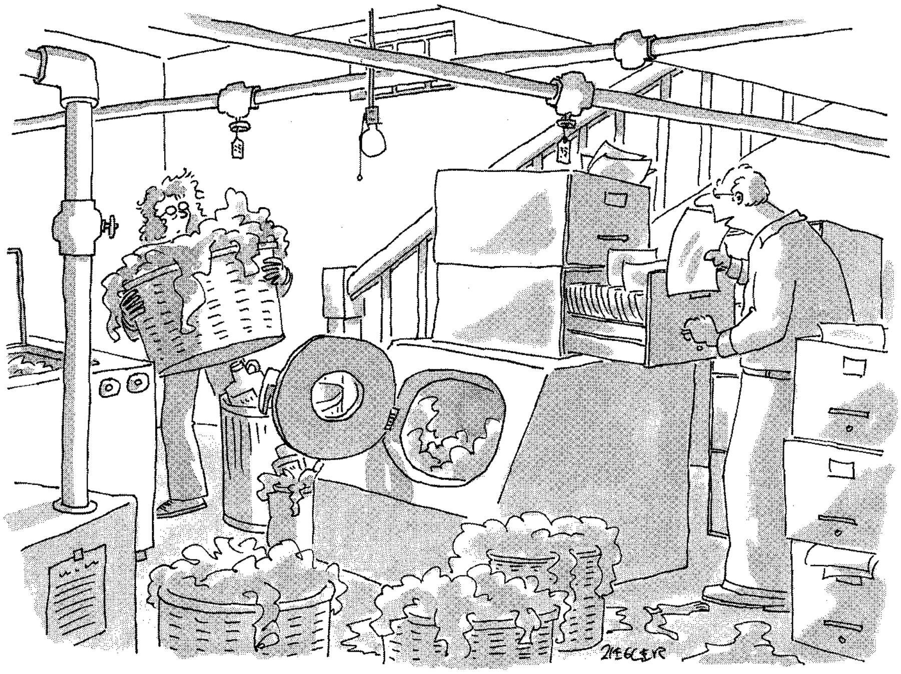
One of the rationales for such tactics was spelled out in a series of articles by John Arquilla, a professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, in Monterey, California, and a consultant on terrorism for the RAND corporation. “It takes a network to fight a network,” Arquilla wrote in a recent article in the San Francisco *Chronicle*:

> When conventional military operations and bombing failed to defeat the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya in the 1950s, the British formed teams of friendly Kikuyu tribesmen who went about pretending to be terrorists. These “pseudo gangs,” as they were called, swiftly threw the Mau Mau on the defensive, either by befriending and then ambushing bands of fighters or by guiding bombers to the terrorists’ camps. What worked in Kenya a half-century ago has a wonderful chance of undermining trust and recruitment among today’s terror networks. Forming new pseudo gangs should not be difficult.

“If a confused young man from Marin County can join up with Al Qaeda,” Arquilla wrote, referring to John Walker Lindh, the twenty-year-old Californian who was seized in Afghanistan, “think what professional operatives might do.”

A few pilot covert operations were conducted last year, one Pentagon adviser told me, and a terrorist cell in Algeria was “rolled up” with American help. The adviser was referring, apparently, to the capture of Ammari Saifi, known as Abderrezak le Para, the head of a North African terrorist network affiliated with Al Qaeda. But at the end of the year there was no agreement within the Defense Department about the rules of engagement. “The issue is approval for the final authority,” the former high-level intelligence official said. “Who gets to say ‘Get this’ or ‘Do this’?”

A retired four-star general said, “The



“Now that I’ve moved my files down here to the basement, we’ll be able to spend a lot more time together.”

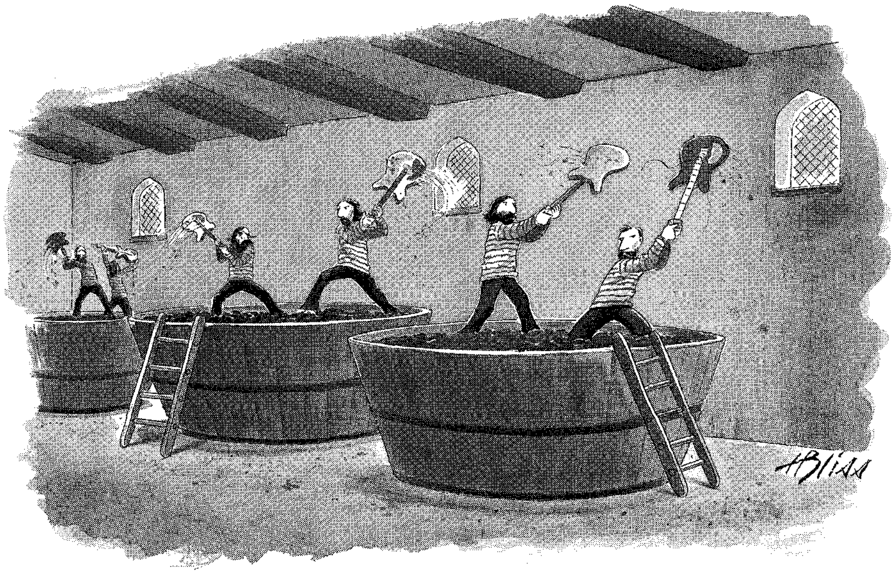
basic concept has always been solid, but how do you insure that the people doing it operate within the concept of the law? This is pushing the edge of the envelope." The general added, "It's the oversight. And you're not going to get Warner"—John Warner, of Virginia, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee—"and those guys to exercise oversight. This whole thing goes to the Fourth Deck." He was referring to the floor in the Pentagon where Rumsfeld and Cambone have their offices.

"It's a finesse to give power to Rumsfeld—giving him the right to act swiftly, decisively, and lethally," the first Pentagon adviser told me. "It's a global free-fire zone."

The Pentagon has tried to work around the limits on covert activities before. In the early nineteen-eighties, a covert Army unit was set up and authorized to operate overseas with minimal oversight. The results were disastrous. The Special Operations program was initially known as Intelligence Support Activity, or I.S.A., and was administered from a base near Washington (as was, later, Gray Fox). It was established soon after the failed rescue, in April, 1980, of the American hostages in Iran, who were being held by revolutionary students after the Islamic overthrow of the Shah's regime. At first, the unit was kept secret from many of the senior generals and civilian leaders in the Pentagon, as well as from many members of Congress. It was eventually deployed in the Reagan Administration's war against the Sandinista government, in Nicaragua. It was heavily committed to supporting the Contras. By the mid-eighties, however, the I.S.A.'s operations had been curtailed, and several of its senior officers were court-martialled following a series of financial scandals, some involving arms deals. The affair was known as "the Yellow Fruit scandal," after the code name given to one of the I.S.A.'s cover organizations—and in many ways the group's procedures laid the groundwork for the Iran-Contra scandal.

Despite the controversy surrounding Yellow Fruit, the I.S.A. was kept intact as an undercover unit by the Army. "But we put so many restrictions on it," the second Pentagon adviser said. "In I.S.A., if you wanted to travel fifty miles you had to get a special order. And there were certain areas, such as Lebanon, where they could not go." The adviser acknowledged that the current operations are similar to those two decades earlier, with similar risks—and, as he saw it, similar reasons for taking the risks. "What drove them then, in terms of Yellow Fruit, was that they had no intelligence on Iran," the adviser told me. "They had no knowledge of Tehran and no people on the ground who could prepare the battle space."

Rumsfeld's decision to revive this approach stemmed, once again, from a failure of intelligence in the Middle East, the adviser said. The Administration believed that the C.I.A. was unable, or unwilling, to provide the military with the information it needed to effectively challenge stateless terrorism. "One of the big challenges was that we didn't have Humint"—human intelligence—"collection capabilities in areas where terrorists existed," the adviser told me. "Because the C.I.A. claimed to have such a hold on Humint, the way to get around them, rather than take them on, was to claim that the agency didn't do Humint to support Special Forces operations overseas. The C.I.A. fought it." Referring to Rumsfeld's new authority for covert operations, the first Pentagon adviser told me, "It's not empowering military intelligence. It's emasculating the C.I.A."



PETE TOWNSHEND VINEYARDS

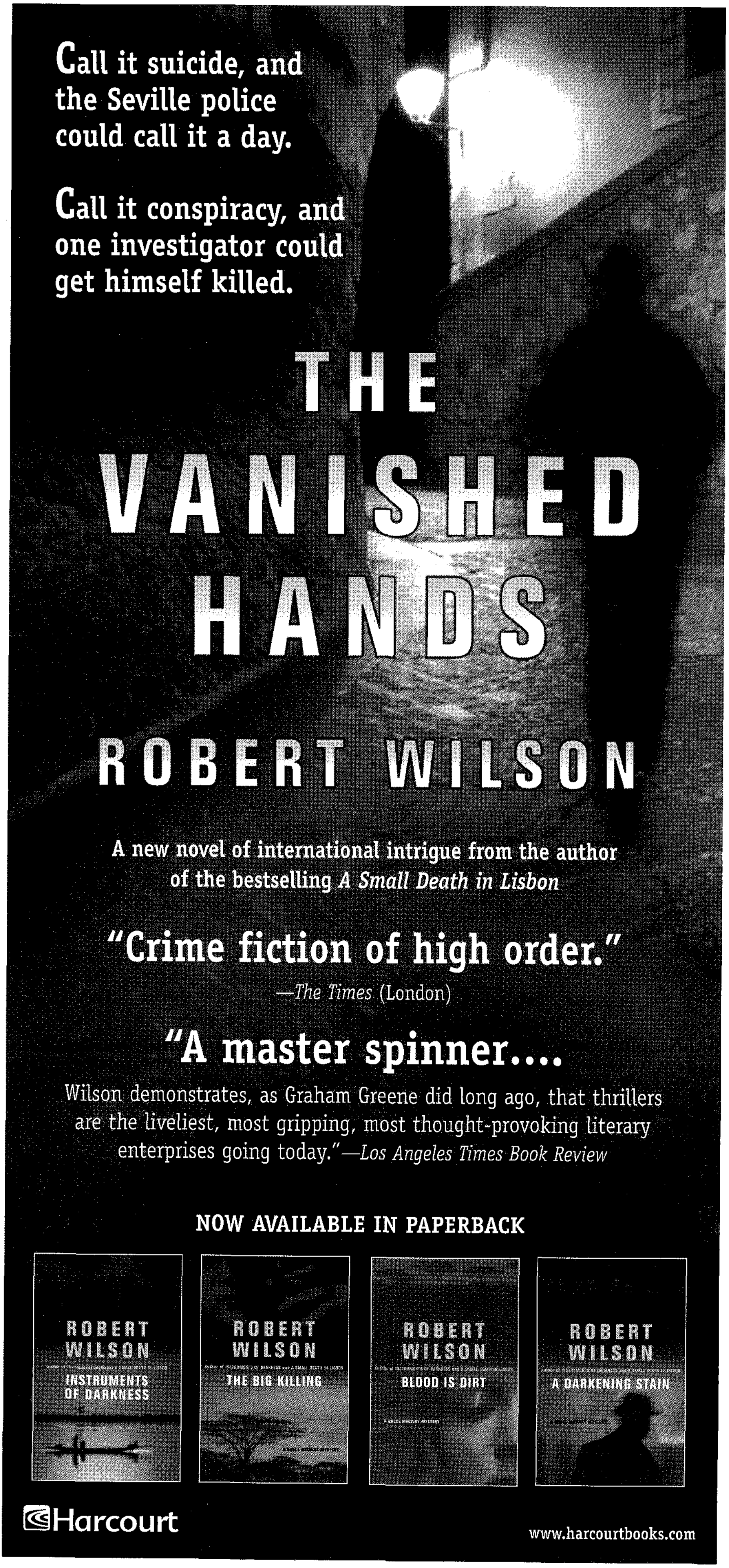
A former senior C.I.A. officer depicted the agency's eclipse as predictable. "For years, the agency bent over backward to integrate and coördinate with the Pentagon," the former officer said. "We just caved and caved and got what we deserved. It is a fact of life today that the Pentagon is a five-hundred-pound gorilla and the C.I.A. director is a chimpanzee."

There was pressure from the White House, too. A former C.I.A. clandestine-services officer told me that, in the months after the resignation of the agency's director George Tenet, in June, 2004, the White House began "coming down critically" on analysts in the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Intelligence (D.I.) and demanded "to see more support for the Administration's political position." Porter Goss, Tenet's successor, engaged in what the recently retired C.I.A. official described as a "political purge" in the D.I. Among the targets were a few senior analysts who were known to write dissenting papers that had been forwarded to the White House. The recently retired C.I.A. official said, "The White House carefully reviewed the political analyses of the D.I. so they could sort out the apostates from the true believers." Some senior analysts in the D.I. have turned in their resignations—quietly, and without revealing the extent of the disarray.

The White House solidified its control over intelligence last month, when it forced last-minute changes in the intelligence-reform bill. The legislation, based substantially on recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, originally gave broad powers, including authority over intelligence spending, to a new national-intelligence director. (The Pentagon controls roughly eighty per cent of the intelligence budget.) A reform bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 96–2. Before the House voted, however, Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld balked. The White House publicly supported the legislation, but House Speaker Dennis Hastert refused to bring a House version of the bill to the floor for a vote—ostensibly in defiance of the President, though it was widely understood in Congress that Hastert had been delegated to stall the bill. After intense White House and Pentagon lobbying, the legislation was rewritten. The bill that Congress approved sharply reduced the new director's power, in the name of permitting the Secretary of Defense to maintain his "statutory responsibilities." Fred Kaplan, in the online magazine *Slate*, described the real issues behind Hastert's action, quoting a congressional aide who expressed amazement as White House lobbyists bashed the Senate bill and came up "with all sorts of ludicrous reasons why it was unacceptable."

"Rummy's plan was to get a compromise in the bill in which the Pentagon keeps its marbles and the C.I.A. loses theirs," the former high-level intelligence official told me. "Then all the pieces of the puzzle fall in place. He gets authority for covert action that is not attributable, the ability to directly task national-intelligence assets"—including the many intelligence satellites that constantly orbit the world.

"Rumsfeld will no longer have to refer anything through the government's intelligence wringer," the former official went on. "The intelligence system was designed to put competing agencies in competition. What's missing will be the dynamic tension that insures everyone's priorities—in the C.I.A., the D.O.D., the F.B.I., and even the Department of Homeland Security—are discussed. The most insidious implication of the new system is that Rumsfeld no longer has to tell people what he's doing so they can ask, 'Why are you doing this?' or 'What are your priorities?' Now he can keep all of the mattress mice out of it." ♦



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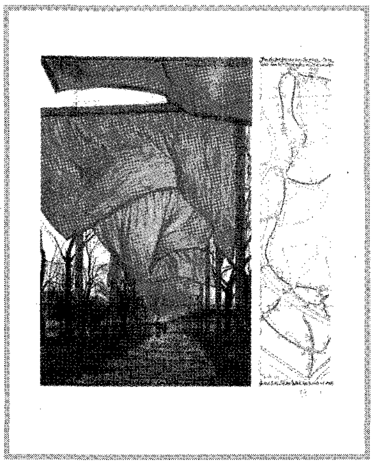

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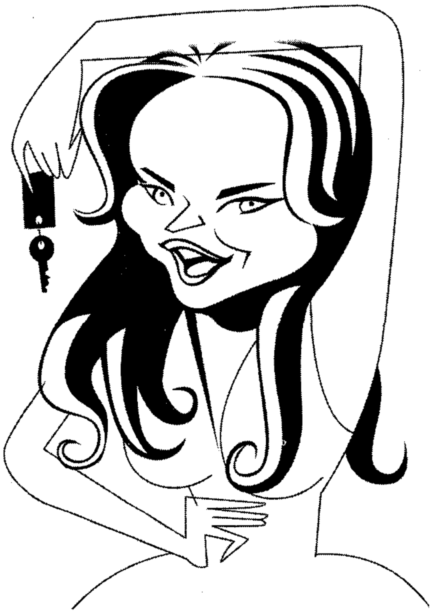
SHOUTS & MURMURS

REAL-ESTATE NOTE

BY ANDY BOROWITZ

> Julia Roberts . . . has bought 32 acres of Taos, N.M., real estate from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, People magazine reports.
> —*The Associated Press.*

Sold: To actress Lindsay Lohan, a seventy-five-thousand-square-foot reinforced bunker previously owned by Vice-President Dick Cheney, for $18.6 million; originally acquired in 2001 for free.



ROBERT RISKO

For Lindsay Lohan, house-hunting had been an exercise in frustration. The "Mean Girls" star almost made an offer on outgoing Attorney General John Ashcroft's Federal-style estate in Arlington, Virginia, but was reportedly "creeped out" when a second walk-through revealed twenty-four-hour surveillance cameras in every room. "It wasn't for me, but I told Paris Hilton to check it out," she says.

Next stop was the Silver Spring, Maryland, ranch house of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, but this time Ms. Lohan didn't even bite. "Every room in the place was sealed tight with duct tape and plastic sheeting," she remembers. "I was, like, whoa, my posse will not want to party here."

Scanning the real-estate pages of the Washington *Post*, a listing for Attorney General nominee Alberto Gonzales's Georgetown ski-chalet-style home caught her eye. "It said the house was 'as quaint as old Geneva,' " she recalls. "I went on a ski trip to Gstaad last year and it totally ruled!" But the home's antiquated plumbing was too daunting, even for the plucky "Freaky Friday" star: "Quaint? More like *so last year!*"

Giving up on Washington, Ms. Lohan decided to try Manhattan—specifically, the Battery Park pied-à-terre of former New York City police commissioner Bernard Kerik, who raved that the place had "a great floor plan" and "no nosy neighbors." The *Teen People* cover girl was hooked, but time was of the essence: "My broker said that if I liked it I better act fast, because Brad Pitt needed a place right away and was ready to make an offer." The deal made it all the way to contract before Ms. Lohan received some crushing news: Mr. Kerik did not even own the apartment, and thus was in no position to sell it. "That's what I hate about house-hunting," she says. "People are always hiding junk from you."

The very next day, however, she found the perfect place to hide from the flashbulbs of the paparazzi: Dick Cheney's secure command center, buried five thousand feet below the earth's surface. While the Vice-President's fortress of solitude wasn't the first underground lair Ms. Lohan had looked at, "the other place my broker showed me was more like a spider hole." Decorated in a style that the seller calls "early NORAD," the starlet's new crib boasts five-foot-thick concrete walls and a state-of-the-art communication system that will allow her to speak directly to her agent, manager, and publicist through bulges in the backs of their jackets. But, most important, Ms. Lohan's new address has what every real-estate broker knows are the six magic words: "undisclosed location, undisclosed location, undisclosed location." ♦

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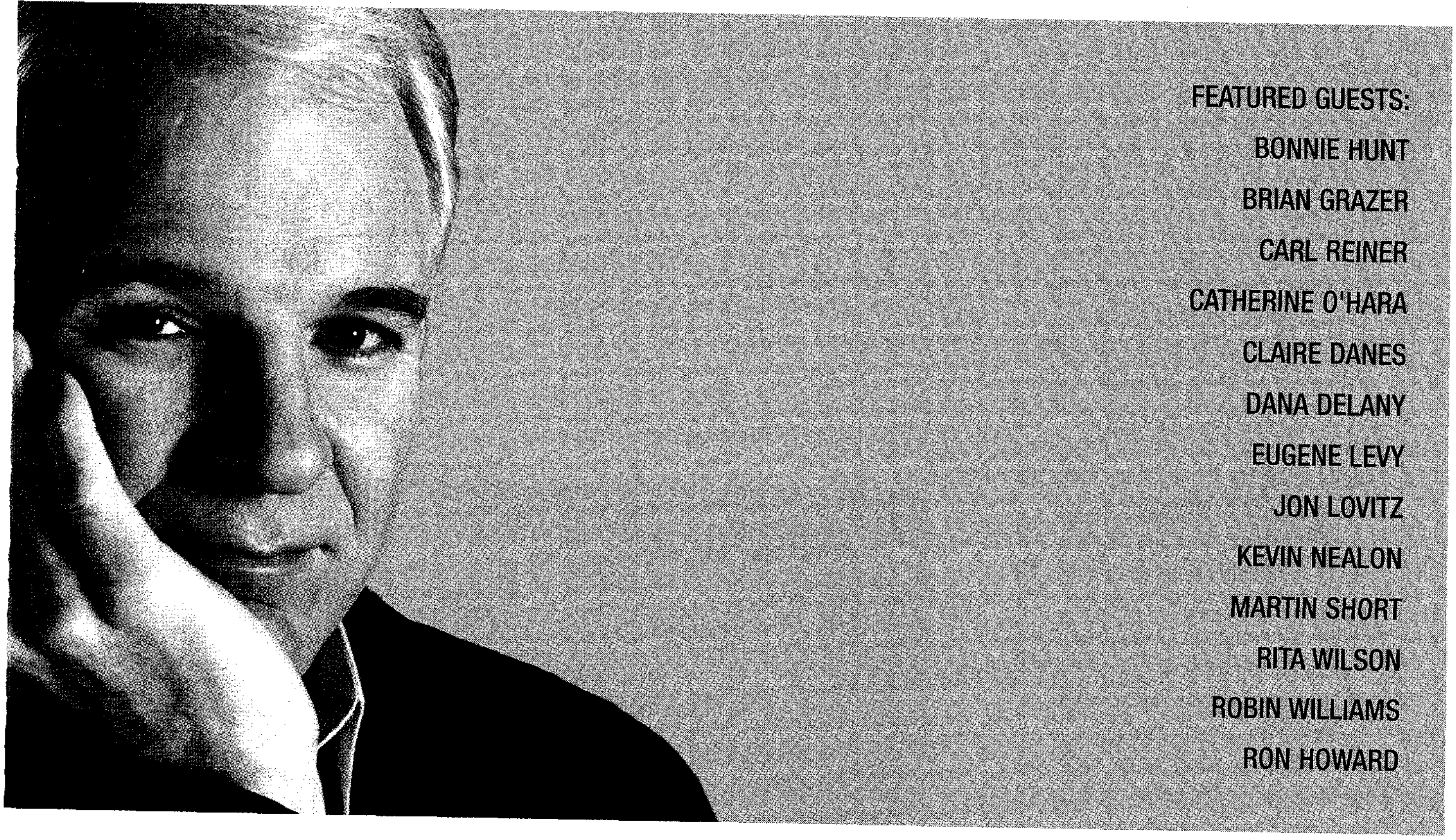

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

FUNNY BOYS

Success and the city.

BY REBECCA MEAD

When Josh Abramson, Ricky Van Veen, Jakob Lodwick, and Zach Klein decided in the spring of last year that they wanted to live in New York City, their preparation consisted largely of what they called "Sex and the City" nights. They would rent DVDs of the HBO series and watch for hours at a time, while drinking gin-and-tonics and imagining what delights the city held in store.

Their purpose in watching the programs was not really to learn about the habits of women they were likely to encounter in Manhattan; Josh, Ricky, and Jakob are twenty-three, and Zach is a year younger. Most of the girls they knew who'd moved to New York were not so much juggling lovers or purchasing fabulous designer clothes as struggling to get a job, or find an apartment. Instead, the four friends found themselves identifying with the four television characters. Josh, Ricky, and Jakob had been living together for a year in San Diego (while Zach was completing his senior year), and they had discovered that, although the California sun and beach were pleasant enough, San Diego was the kind of place where, as Josh liked to put it, if you were motivated you bartended four nights a week.

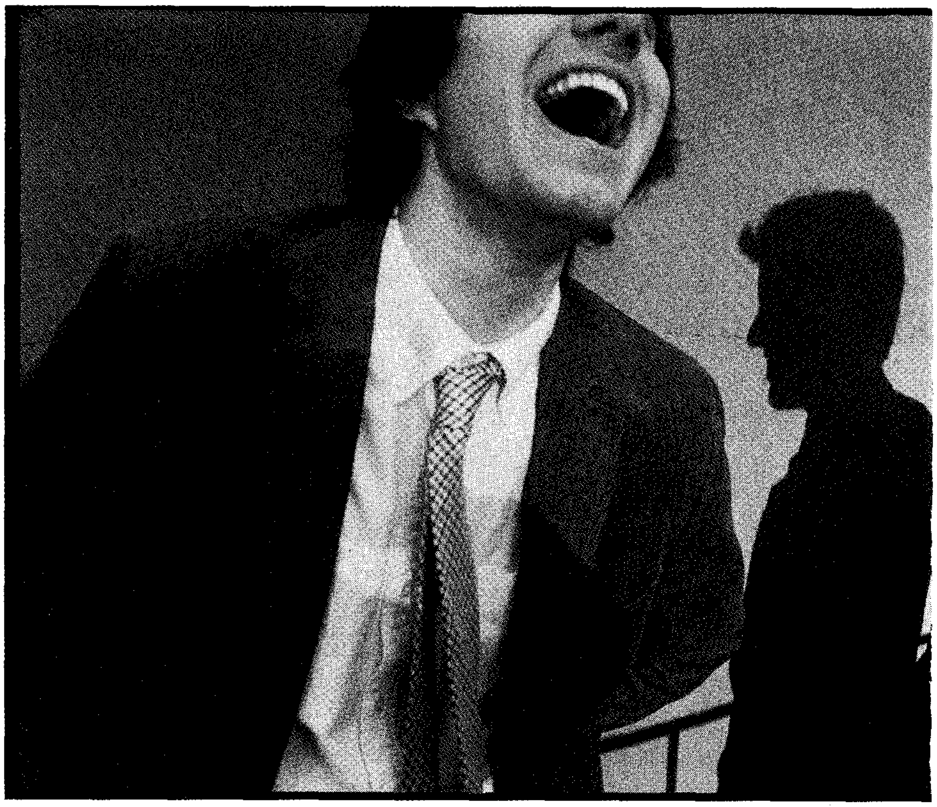
The friends finally arrived in New York last summer, and took up residence in a newly renovated, forty-two-hundred-square-foot, five-bedroom loft in Tribeca, which rents for ten thousand dollars a month—a move that bears about as much relation to the typical postcollegiate experience as "Sex and the City" does to the demographic it purports to represent. The friends have avoided the hardships endured by some of their peers, such as being obliged to live in the outer boroughs, owing to the business they run out of their fifth bedroom, a Web site called CollegeHumor.com. The site features articles written by students or recent graduates on subjects such as "Everything I Learned About Life I Learned in First Semester" and "The Guide to a Great IM Profile," but the mainstay of its content is visual: digital photographs and video snippets of dorm-room fun submitted by the online readership, and updated daily. It is visited by nearly eight million unique users a month.

CollegeHumor.com was started in 1999 by Josh and Ricky, who grew up in a suburb of Baltimore called Timonium and have been friends since sixth grade. The site began as a place to collect all the jokes, links, and silly photographs that college students like to e-mail around, and served as a kind of nerdy diversion for Josh, who went to the University of Richmond, and Ricky, who was at Wake Forest. Eventually, they recruited Jakob, a student at Rochester Institute of Technology (whom Ricky and Josh met online, although he also grew up in Timonium), to help manage the site; Zach, a college friend of Ricky's from Wake Forest, joined later.

The site came to dominate the waking hours of all four collaborators, whose formal educations were neglected. In certain instances, this was probably not a bad thing: the textbook used for one class in e-commerce that Josh took toward his degree, in finance, had been rendered obsolete by the dot-com crash of 2000; according to its calculations CollegeHumor.com should have been bringing in fifteen million dollars a month.

The numbers were nowhere near that good, but they were good enough for the friends to decide that they could attempt to make the site their full-time job. In the year and a half since Josh, Ricky, and Jakob left college, traffic to the site has grown three hundred per cent. In December of 2003, CollegeHumor.com generated $45,400; in December of this year, the revenues were $405,000, nearly half of that coming from sales of faux-vintage T-shirts with slogans— "What Would Ashton Do?"; "I Gave My Word to Stop at Third: 1987 Teen Abstinence Day Suffolk County Public Schools"—which they started marketing last spring under the brand name Busted Tees.

Hence the apartment, which is decorated, in only semi-ironic fashion, ac-



Ricky Van Veen, Jakob Lodwick, Zach Klein, and Josh Abramson, in the Tribeca loft whe cording to the CollegeHumor guys' idea of urban sophistication, with a mixture of purchases from stores in SoHo and from Bloomingdale's. These include a leather couch; a dining table perpetually set with a runner, placemats, and napkins in napkin rings, in readiness for grand dinner parties of which they have so far had one; a piano on which Josh, who supplemented his income in high school with piano-bar appearances, is able to play the entire Beatles catalogue; and a cabinet filled with crystal wineglasses donated by Josh's mother. In perhaps the best measure of post-adolescent male luxury, there is a cumulative total of a hundred and fifty-three inches of flat-screen television scattered around the dwelling.

Although the quartet has not avoided some real-estate pitfalls that savvier New Yorkers might have been able to anticipate—the empty lot outside the loft's windows was transformed, within weeks of their move, into a construction site, the future location of a twenty-one-story apartment building—their home serves not just as a workplace and a shelter but also as an expression of how they would like to be perceived. Readers of CollegeHumor.com might suspect, or hope, that its creators live in a den of beer bongs, pinball machines, and unwashed dishes. This is just what the CollegeHumor boys, who have recently discovered the joy of port, wanted to avoid. "Josh was at this advertising convention, and they were giving out drinks, and the waiter looked at him and said, 'I can get you an orange juice,'" Ricky said one recent afternoon, while lounging in the apartment and explaining the drawbacks of youthful success. "It's hard being taken seriously when you are our age. But, here, people can walk in and say, Obviously, these guys are doing something right."

What does college humor consist of, judging from the contents of CollegeHumor.com? Girls without their tops on are one very popular source of college humor, as are girls kissing each other. Vehicular mishaps also count as college humor; in one, a crane being used to fish a car out of the water topples over and itself falls in. Cute animals, such as a sleeping kitten propped between the pipes of a radiator, are funny, and so are highway signs, like one outside a McDonald's that reads "Our salads are the shizzle dizzle." But what is really funny is beer. "People love to send in photographs of their refrigerators filled with beer," Josh said. Also popular are photographs of beer-can mobiles hanging from dorm-

ey live and run the CollegeHumor.com Web site. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

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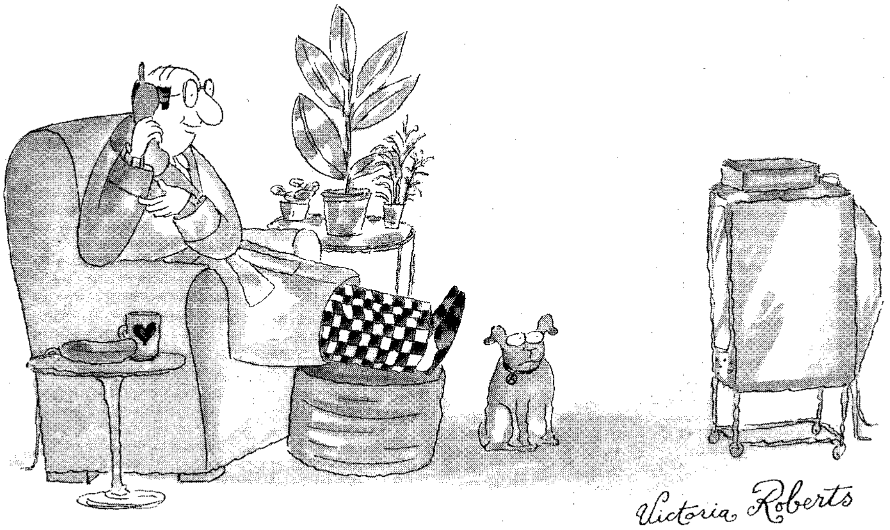

"I thought I'd stay home today and accept the things I can't change."

room ceilings, and of beer cans incongruously placed around the foot of a potted plant, which is, in turn, incongruously placed in a men's communal bathroom, and so on.

In addition to receiving random submissions, the guys of CollegeHumor have recently seen the advantages of generating their own content—or branding content in the public domain as their own. In October, the site made available, thanks to TiVo, a video clip of Ashlee Simpson's "Saturday Night Live" meltdown—she hurried offstage after her band and her lip-synch track didn't mesh—only minutes after the event had actually occurred. That clip garnered close to a million hits in two days. The site has similarly been a popular destination for those who didn't see Ron Artest's assault on an N.B.A. spectator sufficient times in replay, and who want to witness it over and over again in Windows Media. Clips like these have earned CollegeHumor.com its first links from such heavily read sites as the Drudge Report, which is to the world of Web sites what having your book promoted on "Oprah" is to the world of publishing.

Another innovation was the Election Erection '04 contest, which served as an opportunity for first-time voters—a bloc that was thought by pundits to hold the key to the nation's future—to state their political preferences by decorating their bodies with the names of favored Presidential candidates. By Election Day, the site featured more than three hundred mostly female students, who showed a considerable range of inventiveness in their use of display type. Many opted for a message ("Kerry Me Away" or "Bush '04") written in lipstick or marker pen in more or less the place where a T-shirt logo would have been, had a T-shirt been worn. There was also, in a number of instances, the innovative use of official campaign stickers as pasties; and the witty pairing of a full Brazilian bikini wax with the slogan, inscribed just below the navel, "Say No To Bush." The final tally of submissions, which had Kerry beating Bush nearly two-to-one, demonstrated that the moral values of at least some Republican voters do not exclude posing, "Girls Gone Wild" style, with "Bush" scrawled on one buttock and "Dick" on the other.

The responsibility for choosing which photographs will be featured falls to Ricky, who serves as the site's editor. Josh handles business, Jakob deals with the technical side of things, and Zach takes care of design. The workload at CollegeHumor.com has grown so great that recently the four advertised on Craig's List for an intern, a position for which they received more than a hundred applications, mostly from recent college graduates, although there was one from what Josh called a "forty-five-year-old guy" with a background in retail sales.

"Ricky doesn't actually have to think it's funny; he just has to know that college kids think it's funny," Josh explained. A key to college humor, the four have realized, is that students like to think they belong to a small in-crowd that understands the joke, while the public at large remains clueless. Take the phrase "More Cowbell," which is a slogan appearing on one of the most popular of the company's Busted Tees; it comes from an instruction given in a skit on "Saturday Night Live." "Not everyone saw that episode, so the people who did see it think it is that much cooler because nobody else knows," Josh said. Another familiar trope of contemporary college humor is a hand gesture known as the shocker, in which the ring finger of the hand is held down by the thumb while the remaining three fingers stay rigid. "No one over the age of twenty-five knows what it means, but I guarantee you that ninety per cent of college students know what it is," Josh said. (The gesture indicates a method of pleasuring a female partner, though not one that looks to be easily undertaken without incurring hand cramps.) Ricky had the idea of manufacturing a large foam hand, the Big Shocker, like those on sale at sports events. So far, close to twenty thousand have been sold through CollegeHumor.com, for a profit of about ten dollars apiece. "We figured that other people would copy them, so we took a patent out on it," Josh said. "So we have a U.S. government document that has a picture of the shocker on it. It's kind of funny."

Advertising is also a source of revenue, some of it from such companies as DreamWorks, some of it from sports-gambling sites, and some of it from other manufacturers of T-shirts and venders of novelties. The CollegeHumor team has been struggling with the question of whether it is worth sacrificing the raciness of the site's content—which does not stray beyond the equivalent of being R-rated, but does not stop much short of it, either—in order to attract more prudish but more lucrative advertisers. "The Navy won't want to have its ad on a page with a girl lifting her shirt on Mardi Gras," Josh said. "But that's why people are coming to our site, to see a girl lifting her shirt on Mardi Gras."

Attracting female readers other than its exhibitionistic contributors to the site is another concern; right now, the readership is about seventy-five-per-cent male. There is one female columnist, Mindy Raf, who writes about "Sex, Relationships, and NYC Life" (examples: "Single and Braless: A Sunday Afternoon in New York City"; "Alcohol and Ovulation: Another Saturday Night at the Bar"). Other strategies are being considered, such as having a regular column devoted to "The O.C.," the Fox show, which is a huge hit among girls in their twenties—so much so that the CollegeHumor boys have discovered that discussing the show's plotlines is an excellent way of striking up a conversation with a girl.

Attracting females, not just to the site but to themselves, is also something of a preoccupation of the four pals. But dating in New York, they have discovered, is unlike dating in other places. "It is a more difficult scene to penetrate if you are not used to it," Josh explained. "Going out and starting to talk to somebody and having them automatically not like you—it's not like that in other places." Another potential dating hazard identified, if not yet experienced, by the four is the possibility of attracting women whose real interest is in their purchasing power rather than their personalities. "I thought New York girls would be higher maintenance than what I have experienced, but I haven't had to take anyone out to really nice restaurants or anything," said Jakob, whose dates, toward the end of last year, included a visiting British student who was, he declared one night before going to meet her, perfect for him, her perfection including the fact that she was returning home at the end of the semester. The friends do go to nice restaurants; one of their new favorites is Landmarc, on West Broadway, which they think is a good place for steak frites, so long as you don't mind being carded.

Students have been prone to bawdy humor since at least the Middle Ages—witness Chaucer's "The Milleres Tale"—and the themes of American college humor have proved remarkably resilient over time. An editor of a book published in 1950 entitled "A Treasury of College Humor" remarked that "although the atomic bomb, and other timely trivia,

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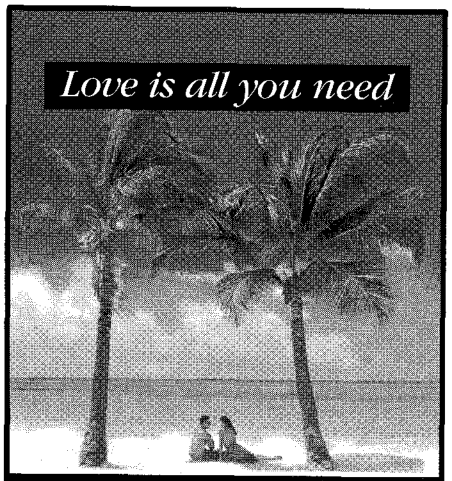
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may momentarily intrude, broad and universal themes—the fate of the football team, the perusal of sex, and the imbibing of alcoholic beverages—remain predominant." (The Iraq war does crop up among CollegeHumor.com's photo collection: one picture, entitled "2004 Shocker World Tour Hits Kirkuk," shows three men and a woman in U.S. uniform on an airstrip giving the shocker.) College humor publications date back as far as 1830, with the publication, at Princeton, of the short-lived *Chameleon* and of *The Thistle;* by the late eighteen-hundreds the *Yale Record,* the *Princeton Tiger,* and the *Harvard Lampoon* had all been established. Some of the pages of those publications would not provoke a smile among today's undergraduates—those featuring punning poems requiring a knowledge of Greek verb declensions, for example—but there is much that differs only in degree from what is now considered hilarious. (The *Emory Phoenix* ran, in the last years of the nineteenth century, a guide to "The Art of Kissing," which advises, among other things, "Don't glue your face to hers and have a good time all to yourself while you're flattening her nose all over one of her cheeks.")

The nineteen-twenties are regarded as the golden age of college humor magazines, when writers such as James Thurber and Robert Benchley could be found making remarkably unfunny contributions to their pages. By that time, more than a hundred comic periodicals were being produced at colleges around the country, their contents aggregated periodically by a single magazine called *College Humor,* which sold as many as eight hundred thousand copies. By the late nineteen-thirties, the culture of college humor was sufficiently depraved to merit note in the *Times,* which quoted Irving H. Berg, the dean of New York University College of Arts, as saying, "What college students seem to think funny is pitifully lacking in real humor." Berg also complained that "the so-called humorous publications emanating from various college and university campuses seem to deal exclusively with the subject of sex." (Berg's present-day successor at N.Y.U., Dean Matthew Santirocco, who admits to having been unfamiliar with CollegeHumor.com until it was recently brought to his attention, says of the site, "It is commercial and self-promotional, and it seems to me that what is essential about humor is that it is not commercial or self-promotional.")

College humor suffered a decline in currency in the nineteen-sixties and the first half of the nineteen-seventies, when campus concerns such as civil rights and the draft proved impossible to translate into the magazines' typical vernacular of antic japery. But there was a restoration in the late seventies and early eighties, aided by the *National Lampoon,* which was founded in 1969 by several graduates of the *Harvard Lampoon* and which had its greatest success with the release of the film "National Lampoon's Animal House," in 1978. The *National Lampoon,* in its heyday, is the media model to which the CollegeHumor boys aspire: a book, "The CollegeHumor Guide to College," is in the works, and they have had informal talks with program-development people at VH1. A CollegeHumor Comedy Tour has just been launched, and the goal is to develop a stable of talent with which to produce TV shows or movies, though the four founders have yet to figure out how, exactly, to translate beer-and-breast-based amusement into forms more dependent on narrative. (Even "Porky's" had a plot.)

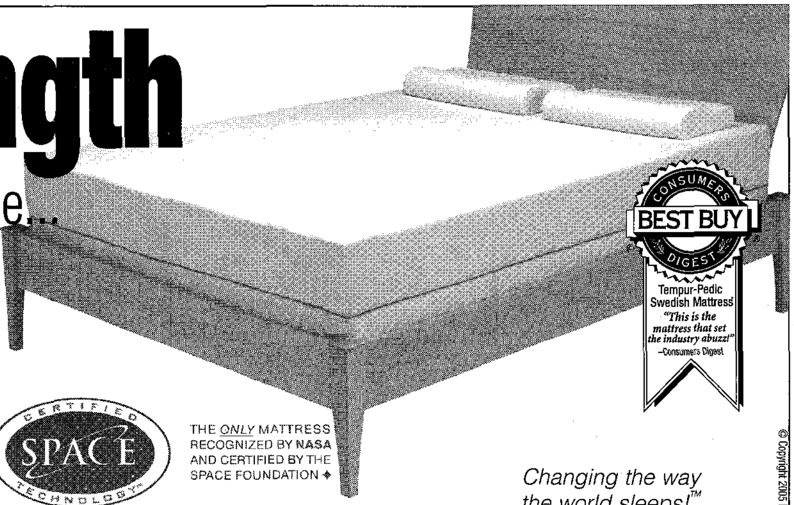
A more direct descendant of the style of humor favored by the *National Lampoon* can be found in *The Onion,* a parody newspaper that was started by two undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1988. Josh, of CollegeHumor.com, is happy to point out that his site has surpassed *The Onion* in traffic, "though I can't say we are better." There is a crucial difference in content between *The Onion* and CollegeHumor.com: while the success of the former depends on the wit of its writers, the appeal of the latter is closer to that of "America's Funniest Home Videos." CollegeHumor.com offers found humor of the sort pioneered by, among others, Steve Allen and David Letterman. Yet CollegeHumor.com isn't the expression of a governing comic sensibility determined to entertain an audience with, say, Stupid Pet Tricks; rather, the audience decides what is funny, and entertains itself. Col-

legeHumor.com doesn't just cater to the lowest common denominator; it's cooked and served by the lowest common denominator, too.

On Thanksgiving weekend, Ricky and Josh attended their five-year high-school reunion, which took place in a bar in downtown Baltimore. The bar was decorated in the manner of an Upper East Side frat-boy hangout, with sporting equipment such as lacrosse sticks and rowing oars mounted on the walls, and large TV screens displaying a college basketball game. Ricky ordered a gin-and-tonic from the open bar, while Josh, anticipating future crowding, ordered two beers at once, holding a full one in his left hand while drinking from the one in his right. Neither was driving—they'd got a ride with a classmate who was studying at night for his M.B.A., working for a brokerage firm during the day, and living at home with his parents. All of Josh and Ricky's old friends knew, of course, that the pair were living in New York and doing well, but no one paid it very much attention. Most classmates had stayed in the Baltimore area, including Ricky's high-school girlfriend, who had just bought a house with her boyfriend, and a woman who had gone to the same college as Josh and was now working as an accountant. The class president, who had been very cool and had ridden a scooter, was now attending motorcycle-repair school in Arizona. One young woman, who was wearing a high-necked white sweater and black pants rather than the low-cut top and low-cut jeans favored by most of her classmates, was rumored to have become a nun, but that rumor was soon determined to be false, if diverting.

Someone had brought a shoebox full of photographs taken by the class archivist, and they were scattered across the bar, there for the taking by those who wanted a memento of their even younger, even fresher years. There were shots of costume parties, shots of jocks mugging for the camera, shots from the prom, where girls with wrist corsages slow-danced with gawky boys, and lots of shots of kids just hanging out in the cafeteria or the gymnasium, grinning at the photographer. They weren't very different from the pictures that appear on Ricky and Josh's Web site—amounting to a simple visual statement: We were here.

Ricky flicked through the pictures and slipped a couple into the inside breast pocket of his jacket, which he'd recently bought at H & M, going into the store and ordering a whole outfit directly off one of the mannequins. There was one of a girl whom he said Josh had always had a crush on; and there was one of himself holding up a big, cumbersome camera—the kind of camera people used before students started snapping themselves with tiny digital cameras or cell phones, and before photographs became things to e-mail or look at online. Josh picked up one or two pictures at random, and for a moment looked nostalgic—not so much for the content of the pictures as for the form. "I kind of miss these," he said. ◆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PROFILES

A MAN OF THE SHADOWS

Can Iyad Allawi hold Iraq together?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

A few days before the New Year, on a crisp, sunny day in the Jordanian capital of Amman, I had tea with Iyad Allawi, the interim Prime Minister of Iraq, on the terrace of an unremarkable limestone villa that serves as the local headquarters for his political organization, the Iraqi National Accord, or the I.N.A. Several Jordanian and Iraqi security men lurked on the edges of the terrace, furtively smoking cigarettes. Only Allawi's American bodyguard, a man wearing the dark suit and dark glasses of an archetypal Secret Service agent, hovered close by. All the windows of an apartment complex overlooking the terrace were shuttered.

Allawi was on a two-day layover in Jordan on his way back to Baghdad, after spending the Christmas holiday with his wife and three children, who live in London. When I arrived at the villa, he was chatting indoors with a Sunni leader, Sheikh Majed Abdelrazzak al-Suleiman, a chief of the influential Dulaimi tribe from Al Anbar province, which includes Ramadi and Falluja, cities that have been particularly plagued by the insurgency against the American occupation of Iraq. I had recently met the Sheikh, a squat, corpulent man, and knew him to be deeply loyal to Allawi, who is a secular Shiite.

An aide led me to the terrace to wait while Allawi and Suleiman finished their conversation. After a while, Allawi joined me outside. A tall, bulky man with a large balding head, a jutting chin, and the lumbering gait of an old prizefighter, he was wearing the uniform of the modern executive: a gray wool suit, burgundy tie, and blue shirt. A young woman brought us mugs of tea, and returned moments later with Ferrero Rocher chocolates.

Allawi will preside over the first national elections in Iraq since Saddam Hussein's removal; the elections are scheduled to take place on January 30th. Allawi himself is running for a seat in the Transitional National Assembly, which will have two hundred and seventy-five members. This body will write a new constitution and select a new Prime Minister. Although Allawi has portrayed the elections as a victory for democracy in Iraq, events in recent weeks have not been auspicious. On December 27th, the Iraqi Islamic Party, the main Iraqi Sunni political party, pulled out of the elections, citing security concerns; the same day, a suicide bomber detonated a car bomb outside the home of Abdulaziz al-Hakim, one of the country's most prominent Shiite leaders, killing fifteen. On January 11th, Allawi admitted in a news conference that "there will be some pockets" of Iraq where violence will prevent people from voting.

The elections were meant to solidify a spirit of Iraqi national unity, but the upcoming vote has only increased the tensions among the country's ethnic groups. The removal of Saddam abruptly disempowered Iraq's Sunni minority, which had ruled Iraq for nearly five centuries. The resulting Sunni hostility toward American occupation forces—and their fears of being subjugated by Iraq's Shiite majority—has inflamed the insurgency. Many Sunnis fear that Shiite parties will win the elections and install an Islamic theocracy closely linked to Iran's. Some Sunni leaders have called for a boycott of the elections.

I asked Allawi whether he was worried that the elections might lead to more violence. If there was a weak Sunni turnout and the Shiites swept the polls, could this deepen the sectarian split in the country and inspire an all-out civil war? Allawi seemed to choose his words carefully, in order to avoid using the word "Sunni." He replied, "I may be wrong, of course, but I don't believe that the ingredients for civil war really exist in Iraq. There are people who are trying to foment religious and ethnic problems in Iraq. The problem of the election is not security; it's the inclusivity. There are those who are trying to prevent this, by telling people not to vote, by attacking and committing crimes. I have been trying to insure inclusivity by talking to people, even on the fringes of the so-called resistance—tribal leaders from Al Anbar, from Mosul, Shias also, and Kurds." (Iraq's minority Kurdish population, concentrated in the north of the country, had flirted with the idea of pursuing independence.)

Allawi told me that he had met with former members of Saddam's Baath Party. (Allawi began his own career as a Baathist in the nineteen-fifties, when he was young, long before Saddam's rise to power, at a time when Baathism represented anti-colonialism and pan-Arabism.) "I ask these former Baathists, what is it you want to achieve—to bring Saddam back, to get the multinational forces out of Iraq? If it's to bring Saddam back to power, forget it—*khalas*—he's finished. He ended like a rat, hiding in a hole in the ground. This is not respectable. Or if you want to bring bin Laden or someone like him to Iraq, we'll fight you room to room. We won't accept this, ever. If you want to get the multinational forces out, then join the elections. Use your *vote* to get them out."

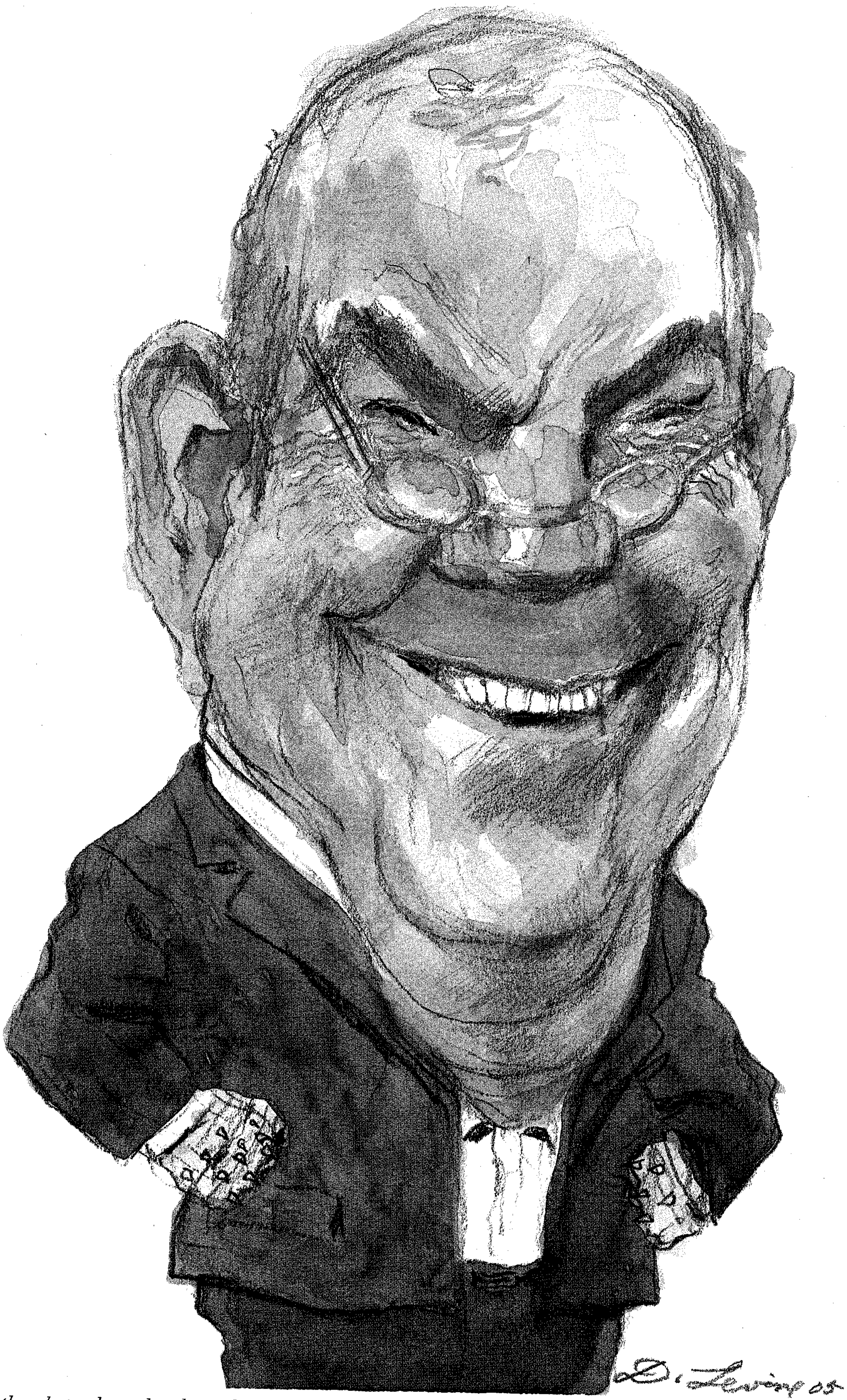
I pointed out that such arguments had not attracted much support. "No," Allawi said. "The trend is not good."

An aide came over with a note. Allawi read it and then, turning to me, apologized. There was someone important he had to see; he didn't tell me who. He asked me to wait until he returned.

After Allawi left, I went inside to talk to Sheikh Suleiman. He and two other men were sitting on black leather sofas in a room decorated with Persian rugs, faux-Hellenistic columns, and oil paintings evoking ancient Mesopotamia. One of the men was the Sheikh's assistant; the other was Akeel al-Saffar, one of Allawi's senior aides. The Sheikh wore a gray *dishdasha* robe with ornate diamond-and-silver cufflinks.

I had visited Suleiman a week earlier,

DAVID LEVINE



"Iyad's a thug, but a thug where he needs to be one," a friend of his said. "The Americans who set this up call him Saddam Lite."

at his home in Amman. He had told me that he had fled Iraq for Jordan in 1996, after becoming an opponent of Saddam's regime. Once there, he had joined the Iraqi National Accord, which was at that time an exile organization dedicated to the overthrow of Saddam. The group, which was run by Allawi, had been under C.I.A. patronage since 1992. As the Sheikh told it, he and Allawi had helped prepare the way for American forces in Al Anbar province in the months before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March, 2003, by securing agreement from Iraqi military officers not to fight coalition troops. They had then travelled together into Iraq in April, 2003, after the fall of Baghdad, and Allawi had spent several days at the Sheikh's house in Ramadi before continuing to Baghdad. Eight months later, however, Suleiman had fled to Jordan again, because of death threats from insurgents, who had accused him—not inaccurately, from the sound of it—of being an American collaborator. Suleiman's image problem was similar to that of Allawi, who is often vilified by Iraqis, particularly Sunnis, as a Western puppet.

"The Americans are disloyal to their friends," the Sheikh said. "I say this as someone who was considered an agent of theirs. They betrayed us by allowing Baghdad to be sacked, allowing the thieves to come in." In spite of his friendship with Allawi, he said that he could not, as a Sunni leader, support the elections under the present circumstances. "You are from America," he said. "If what happened in Falluja had happened in your city, could you have elections there?" (Suleiman was referring to the Marine assault on Falluja in November, which had displaced most of its two hundred and fifty thousand residents and destroyed large swaths of the city.) "If the election goes ahead as planned, it will be deficient. Iraq is like a house. You cannot build one room and leave the rest unfinished."

The Sheikh said that he had come to the villa to ask Allawi to advocate a six-month postponement of the election—such a delay, he said, would help win over Sunnis. Allawi had been noncommittal, reminding him that the election timetable had been set by the United Nations, but saying, "We'll see." Suleiman sighed and wearily threw up his hands, meaning that he knew that the elections would go ahead as planned.

In our previous meeting, Suleiman had told me that, regardless of the election results, he hoped that Allawi would remain Iraq's leader. "After thirty-five years of Saddam Hussein, Iraqis need severity with fairness," he said. "We no longer respect laws. We need someone to stop us—a strong man, decisive, someone who can build a strong Army and rebuild the institutions of the state. In this phase, Allawi is the best man for the job." With the elections a week closer, I wanted to know if Suleiman's perspective had changed. But the Sheikh was distracted: his assistant was holding a cell phone and reading a text message to the Sheikh, who began questioning him with consternation. The assistant reread the message several times, glowering. Saffar, the senior aide, explained that the Sheikh had been unable to retrieve his text messages for some time, and had finally asked his assistant to do it for him. One message was a death threat, warning Sheikh Suleiman that if he didn't break with Allawi within forty-eight hours he would be killed. The message added that an assassination team had been sent to Jordan to carry out the sentence if he failed to comply. The deadline had passed more than ten days earlier. Saffar smiled, seemingly unperturbed. Suleiman looked genuinely frightened. His eyes were wide and he shouted commands to his aide, who made a series of phone calls. I gathered that they were trying to reach the Jordanian intelligence service.

At this point, Allawi returned. Suleiman explained what had happened. Allawi grunted, but he turned to me, gestured to the terrace, and said, in a businesslike way, "Shall we continue?"

"I've spent so much time with family that I've started to lose sight of what really matters."

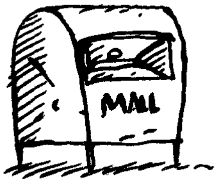
Allawi was anointed Iraq's leader in June, in a formal ceremony with Paul Bremer III, the outgoing administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Since Allawi took office, Iraq has become unmoored by violence, and his efforts to restore security have been the central obsession of his leadership. "I want to see consolidated the rule of law," he said after we went back outside. "I want to see Iraq unified and strong." One of his first decisions was to announce a state of emergency, and, in the early weeks of his tenure, Allawi took pains to show that he was a man of decision and courage, habitually rushing—some would say recklessly—to the scenes of car-bomb explosions around Baghdad just after they had occurred. He used these occasions to denounce terrorism and defend the rule of law. (His security advisers eventually dissuaded him from this activity.)

More unnervingly, there have been persistent rumors that, a week or so before he took office, Allawi shot and killed several terrorist suspects being held prisoner at a Baghdad police station. When reporters asked him about the rumors, Allawi denied that he had shot anyone, but added that he would do "everything necessary" to protect Iraqis. I was in Baghdad at the time; although most Iraqis I spoke to believed the rumors, journalists and diplomats speculated that Allawi had spread them himself, in order to bolster his stern reputation.

In late June, however, I sat in on an interview, conducted by Paul McGeough, a reporter for the Sydney *Morning Herald*, of a man who claimed to have witnessed the executions. He described how Allawi had been taken to seven suspects, who were made to stand against a wall in a courtyard of the police station, their faces covered. After being told of their alleged crimes by a police official, Allawi had asked for a pistol, and then shot each prisoner in the head. Afterward, the witness said, Allawi had declared to those present, "This is how we must deal with the terrorists." The witness said that he approved of Allawi's act, adding that, in any case, the terrorists were better off dead, for they had been tortured for days.

In the ensuing months, the story has lingered, never having been either fully confirmed or convincingly denied. (Allawi did not address the incident with me.) During my visit to Jordan, a well-known former government minister told me that an American official had confirmed that the killings took place, saying to him, "What a mess we're in—we got rid of one son of a bitch only to get another."

Just as, in the past, Iraqis hid their true feelings about Saddam's brutal tyranny by referring to him as "strict," Iraqis today commonly describe Allawi as "tough." It is an oddly polite term—a euphemism—that conceals varying degrees of fear, loathing, and admiration. An Iraqi friend of Allawi's who has close links to Jordan's Hashemite monarchy told me, "Iyad's a thug, but a thug where he needs to be one. The Americans who set this up call him Saddam Lite." Another old friend of Allawi's, an Iraqi who now lives in Jordan, told me that, during a recent private reunion, Allawi had said that he was shocked, upon returning to Iraq after thirty years in exile, by the degree to which Saddam's rule had debased Iraqi society. "He said Iraqis had become liars and cheats and murderers, and only respected brute force, and that was how he had to deal with them," the friend recalled. In a fit of emotion, Allawi had exclaimed, "I will use brute force!"—three times, as if uttering a vow, punching one fist into the palm of his other hand.



Allawi has a temper, although he tries hard to conceal it. During the crisis in August in Najaf, he appeared in public with a bandaged hand, and there were rumors that he had smashed his fist in a bout of fury, during a critical moment of the standoff. At one point, I asked him about this story, and he laughed and acknowledged sheepishly that it was true—though he wouldn't divulge the precise cause of the incident. "As we were facing the crisis, I was not getting a lot of information—just some to please me, some that was not accurate," he said. "The information I received was wishful thinking rather than the reality. And that's when I hit the table very hard and . . . I broke the hand, a bone in the wrist and another in the hand"—he showed me the fleshy part of his palm—"in two places." He poked at it with his other hand. "But that is water under the bridge." He looked up, and added, "You know, we are emotional people, and we believe in right and wrong."

Allawi's strongman persona has proved politically useful, helping him foster the illusion that he is protecting Iraqi "sovereignty"—even though Iraq is still an occupied country and its security remains a largely American project. In August, Allawi tried to negotiate an end to the uprising in Najaf, which was led by the radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. When talks broke down, however, two thousand U.S. Marines and eighteen hundred Iraqi troops invaded, killing some two thousand insurgents and hundreds of civilians before a deal was finally brokered. Allawi had issued the formal order for the attack, and helicoptered into Najaf during the fighting, but the U.S. had been in charge.

One of his top priorities, Allawi told me, was the creation of a well-trained, well-equipped Iraqi Army large enough to replace U.S. troops, and he has set up a national directorate for domestic security and a police agency dedicated to counterterrorism. Still, a senior American official who has worked closely with him told me, "Allawi is tremendously frustrated that he doesn't have a better military. He's like a gardener without a trowel. We're still building the factory to make the trowel."

In November, Allawi assumed public responsibility for the decision to send U.S. Marines into Falluja, which resulted in thousands of deaths—although it did return the city to government control. But the Falluja assault did not end the Sunni insurgency; the rebellion has spread and maintained intensity. Since the Falluja operation, the northern city of Mosul—where twenty-two American and Iraqi soldiers were killed in their mess tent by a suicide bomber just before Christmas—has become a major new theatre of the war. In Baghdad, assassinations and suicide bombings have become routine occurrences. Certain districts are dominated by insurgents, who attack American military patrols, murder Iraqi policemen, and execute election officials.

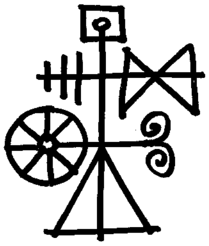
On New Year's Eve, the day after I met Allawi in Amman, he flew back unannounced to Baghdad, and, on a separate flight, so did I. Three days later, a suicide bomber raced his car toward the security cordon guarding Allawi's residence in western Baghdad, just outside the Green Zone. Perimeter guards sprayed machine-gun fire at the bomber, causing him to crash, whereupon his car blew up. Allawi wasn't at home at the time; four guards died in the explosion.

That day, there were numerous other assaults, including a suicide bombing near the airport which killed three Britons and one American, all security contractors. By evening, the news had spread that Allawi had telephoned President Bush to raise the possibility of postponing the elections. This news coincided with an alarmist public statement by his intelligence chief, General Muhammad Shahwani, that there were more insurgents in Iraq than there were American troops—

some two hundred thousand, including sympathizers.

According to most of the people I spoke with, Allawi's main concern was not that there might be violence at the polls but that he might lose power. Although he seemed certain to win a seat in the National Assembly, his party would likely be eclipsed by religious Shiite groups. I asked Allawi why he was running for office—was he angling for the Prime Minister job? He replied like a good politician, saying that he had put himself up as a candidate because friends and his own party had pressured him to do so. "Of course I want to be part of the process," he said. Even if he lost on January 30th, he said firmly, "I'll press on with whatever I believe is right for the country."

"Iyad is a man whom the French would call 'a man of the shadows,' " his cousin Ali Allawi told me in London last month. He, too, owns a home there, a gracious town house just off Kensington High Street. He described Allawi as enigmatic and elusive, qualities he attributed to Allawi's early career as a Baathist, followed by his years spent working with Western intelligence agencies against Saddam. "He understands the Mukhabarat culture of intimidation," Ali Allawi said, referring to the tactics of Iraq's intelligence agency. He believed that this was why Iyad Allawi was chosen last April—by Robert Blackwill, President Bush's special envoy to Iraq, and Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations' envoy—to become interim Prime Minister. Ali Allawi was Iraq's Defense Minister during the final months of the now defunct Iraqi Interim Governing Council. "At the time, the intention was to re-create the security state, and Iyad was the man, almost by default," he said. "Iyad sees maintaining power primarily as an intelligence game. It's a kind of mind-set."



Iyad Allawi was born in 1945 into a Baghdad family with a lineage that goes back a thousand years. His father was an Iraqi Shiite and a doctor; his mother was a Lebanese Shiite, a school administrator from the patrician Osseiran family. And, in one of the characteristically byzantine twists of ancient families of the Middle East, he is related by marriage to another aristocratic Iraqi clan: the Chalabis. Ahmad Chalabi, the head of the Iraqi National Congress, who has been Allawi's political rival for years, is his second cousin. (Chalabi is also the uncle of Ali Allawi.) Chalabi and Iyad Allawi have been involved in bitter disputes over the years, but they have maintained an outward decorum. Tamara Daghestani, an Iraqi who is friends with both men, said, "Iyad and Ahmad are polite to each other. There is rivalry, yes, but they do it in gentlemanly fashion. I have never heard either of them talk badly about the other."

Allawi grew up in Adhamiyah, a wealthy, mostly Sunni district of northwestern Baghdad—just across the Tigris from Kadhimiyah, where the Chalabis lived—and attended one of the best schools in Iraq, the Jesuit-run Baghdad College. Among the other students were Ahmad Chalabi and Adel Abdul Mahdi, the current Iraqi Finance Minister. As children, during the early fifties, the Allawis and the Chalabis were members of a cosmopolitan élite—the descendants of well-to-do Iraqis who had been government ministers and members of parliament in the waning years of the British-installed Hashemite monarchy. During summer holidays, Allawi travelled with his family to Lebanon and Europe.

In 1958, a bloody revolution led by the military toppled the monarchy and upended the privileged lives of the Allawi and Chalabi families. Some older relatives involved in politics were attacked by mobs, who saw them as members of the hated old "plutocracy." Ali Allawi and most of his cousins were sent abroad to study; Ali went to a boarding school in England. The Chalabis moved to Lebanon in 1959. Ali Allawi and Ahmad Chalabi attended M.I.T., and both men eventually went into international banking and, in the mid-seventies, entered the world of Iraqi exile politics.

Iyad Allawi, meanwhile, had been travelling in an entirely different political and social orbit. His family had stayed on in Iraq, and he had become deeply involved with the Baath Party, which he joined at the age of twelve. One of his relatives told me, "The fact that Iyad became a Baathist when he did was not all that unusual for an Iraqi boy of his age and class. In those days, you were either a Communist or a Baathist." The Baathists opposed the rule of President Abdul Karim Qassem, whose government was seen as Communist-influenced. "He became a street fighter, an organizer," the relative recalled. "He kept getting arrested, but without suffering too many consequences, because of his family, their influence and connections."

As a young man, Iyad Allawi studied medicine at Baghdad University; he also remained deeply involved in Baathist politics. Muhammad Sadiq al-Badri, an Iraqi Sunni who is a pharmacist by training—and who managed one of Iraq's state-owned pharmaceutical factories during Saddam's rule—told me that he met Allawi in 1960, upon joining the Party. Later, Allawi became his Party boss. "He was very quiet, but seemed strong," Badri recalled. "He was inflexible, tough, and didn't like to discuss things too much. If he gave orders, we had to carry them out. Afterward, we could discuss, but not before." Badri said that under Allawi he had been involved in many fights with Communists at the university.

In 1963, the Baathists staged a coup against Qassem. Afterward, thousands of Communists were killed by supporters of the coup. I spoke with several Iraqis who alleged that Allawi was involved in the Baathist interrogation of Communists during those bloody days. One Iraqi told me that he had been a Communist in his youth and had been rounded up in the 1963 purge. He said that Allawi had been present while he was tortured, although, after more than forty years, he could not remember if Allawi had personally taken part in his mistreatment. He said that he had been beaten while being hung by his arms from a ceiling hook; by the time he was let down, his shoulders were dislocated.

Allawi denied that he had been involved in torture and killing. "In 1963, I was just a secondary student and I am known to have stood against the Investigation Committee and the National Guard of the Baath Party—those who killed the Communists—and later, when the Baath Party split, I joined the smaller group that opposed the atrocities of 1963," he said.

After the coup, an Army officer, Abdel Salaam Aref—the head of a coalition of competing factions, including the Baathists—seized power. By the end of the year, the Baathists had been purged. Around this time, Allawi became friendly with Saddam, and he helped facilitate his brutal rise. The two conspired against the government and were thrown in jail together. Allawi's family bailed him out, and Saddam escaped in 1966. Allawi and Saddam immediately resumed their plotting.

In July, 1968, the Baathists forcibly regained power. Allawi played a role in this coup: following his party's orders, the day after his mother's funeral he hurried back from Beirut to help seize Baghdad's main radio station. The new regime was led by Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, who became Iraq's new President, and Saddam Hussein, his distant cousin, who quickly emerged as the dominant force. In 1979, Saddam displaced his relative and took over.

During my conversation with Allawi in Amman, he acknowledged his sense of responsibility for this calamitous period of Iraqi history and for the bloody years that followed. It was this feeling of responsibility, he said, that eventually spurred him to fight against Saddam for so many years. Allawi told me that it was not until a few days after the 1968 coup, when a prominent Baghdad lawyer was murdered by killers linked to Saddam, that he had a change of heart. As Saddam consolidated his authority, Allawi said, his misgivings about him deepened. In 1971, while on a visit to Lebanon, he made his break. Friends in Baghdad called Allawi to tell him that Saddam was conducting a purge of the regime; they warned him not to return to Iraq. Allawi decided to move to London and continue his medical studies. But, as is so often the case, Allawi's account of what happened next does not match the recollections of others.

"Over here, stupid."

The most widely shared account of Allawi's first years in London is that he was still working for the Iraqi Baath Party, and for Saddam, as the head of a surveillance network that monitored the sizable Iraqi émigré and student communities in Europe. "When Allawi went to London, he was in charge of the Baath Party for the United Kingdom," Muhammad Sadiq al-Badri said. "Later, he was in charge of the Mukhabarat who worked out of the Embassy. Their job was to watch over the Iraqi students, and he knew many of them. They wanted to make sure they maintained their loyalty to the Party."

Badri also said that Allawi fell out with Saddam after Saddam heard that Allawi had come into contact with M.I.6, the British intelligence agency. "Saddam invited him to come back to Baghdad, he refused to go, and he retired from the Baath Party," Badri said. Allawi told me that he did not begin working with British intelligence until 1990, but there is little doubt that the alliance began many years before that. Both sides profited from the relationship. For the British, Allawi was a powerful Iraqi dissident whose knowledge and contacts offered a potential means of future influence there. For Allawi, the relationship with M.I.6 assured him of continued sanctuary in Britain and provided funds for him to build his own political operation while living in exile.

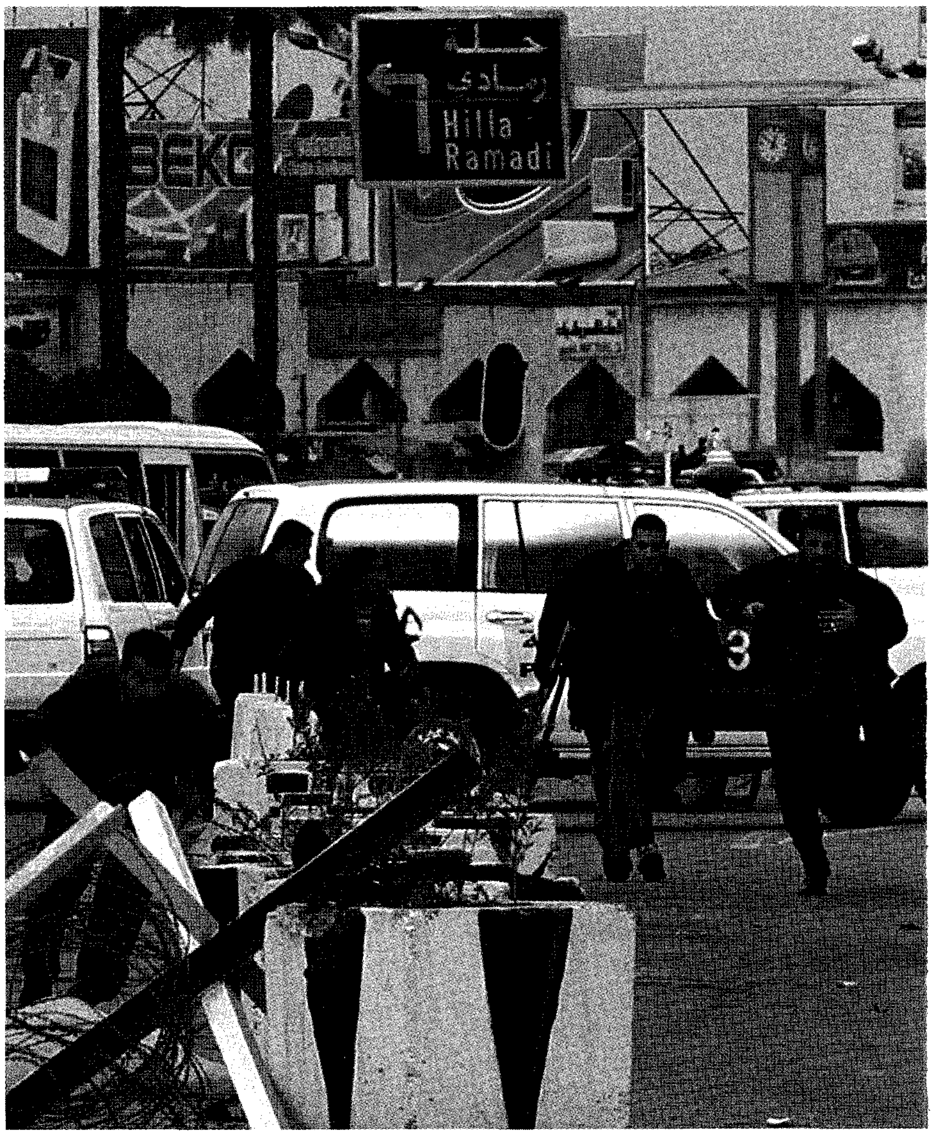
Allawi offered a long, abstruse explanation of his activities in London. He told me that once he moved there he had had nothing more to do with the Iraqi Baath Party, or with Saddam. He said that he had been attached not to the Iraqi Baath Party but to the "global" Baathist movement, serving as the chairman of the Western European branch of the Pan Arab Baath Party. In 1975, he quit that group as well, he said, having decided that Saddam was exerting too much control over it.

I told Allawi that many of the people I spoke to were nevertheless under the impression that he had represented the Iraqi Baath Party or the Mukhabarat during his first years in England. "No, no," he protested. "First of all, I never worked as a government official, never ever. Neither as a Mukhabarat nor anything else. Second, there was not anything called Mukhabarat when I left Iraq." He explained that the organization known by that name had come into existence only in 1973—a rather technical argument, given that *mukhabarat* is an Arab word that means "intelligence." He added that when a precursor agency to the Mukhabarat was created he had argued against it at a Party meeting. Allawi later said that this meeting was the last time he saw Saddam.

"I departed from the ideology of the Baath Party in 1971," Allawi said. "There were two issues which were very dangerous: one was élitism, the second was secret thinking and secret organizational structures. And I stood against those two. I thought this was a thing of the past, and mimics old Communism. This is one reason I had rejected all the offers that were put in front of me to be a member of the government. This went on from 1969 until I left Iraq. I was offered an ambassadorial post while I was still a medical student! I was offered to become the Ambassador to Lebanon. I was offered ministerial posts. I rejected all this, because by then I was very clear in my mind I could not really be working within the Baath Party, because of the growing influence of the Saddam axis."

Around this time, Allawi had obtained a master's degree in epidemiology at University College London and had nearly completed his doctoral thesis, in rheumatology, at Guy's Hospital. He had begun to meet regularly with other exiles, but they had not yet formed an opposition group. Nonetheless, Saddam was clearly worried about their activities. "Saddam really started believing that we were forming a group to overthrow the regime," Allawi said. Beginning in 1975, several of Allawi's close friends were assassinated by hit men presumed to have been dispatched by Saddam. One was killed in Beirut; another was killed shortly after returning, against Allawi's advice, to Baghdad. I asked Allawi why he thought that Saddam had not immediately targeted him for death. He explained that for years Saddam had tried to lure him back to the Party, sending envoys to London for that purpose. He had rejected those overtures.

In 1978, someone finally came after him. One night, Allawi and his wife, Athour, were asleep in their home in suburban London when two men, one of them wielding an axe, broke in and attacked. "I was hit in the head and the chest and the leg," he recalled. "The bones in my leg were all sticking out—there was blood everywhere. My wife became badly injured in the attack also, trying to defend me." During a struggle, Allawi wrested the axe from his attacker, who fled, along with the other intruder. Allawi's voice grew low and pained, and he mentioned that the incident had caused his wife to become mentally disturbed. (In 1981, he divorced Athour; she died last year, of cancer. Allawi married his second wife, Thana, in 1987.)



Security forces flee the explosion of a suicide bomber's car outside the Prime Minister's residen

ALI JASIM/CORBIS

Allawi spent nearly a year in the hospital recovering from the attack, which he believes was ordered by Saddam. He spent much of his convalescence questioning his involvement in politics. "When I was lying in the hospital, I thought to myself, Is it worth it, to continue and to fight Saddam, or is it not?" he said. "And I decided that ultimately my destiny and my country and whatever I stand for required me to fight. On the day I left the hospital, a Thursday, I went to see some of my friends, and I told them, 'We have to consolidate now and we have to work actively to overthrow the regime.'"

In the late seventies, Allawi kept a low profile. He was employed as a part-time consultant with the United Nations Development Program, which was conducting medical training programs in developing countries. He went on missions to Colombia and Bangladesh, among other places.

With intentional vagueness, Allawi said that he became involved in "business" in Yemen and the Persian Gulf region in 1982. Ali Allawi referred to this period as his cousin's time of "hibernation," saying that he never really knew what Iyad was up to. In Iraqi political circles, however, the prevailing wisdom is that Iyad Allawi was working closely with M.I.6. An Iraqi political insider who has known Allawi for years told me, "The Brits set him up with oil deals in Yemen to allow him to make money."

Warren Marik, a former case officer with the C.I.A. who provided support to Iraqi exile groups, told me that Allawi had been an M.I.6 asset until the British passed him on to the Americans, in the early nineties. "We didn't know him

ater that day, news spread that Allawi had telephoned President Bush to raise the possibility of postponing the elections.

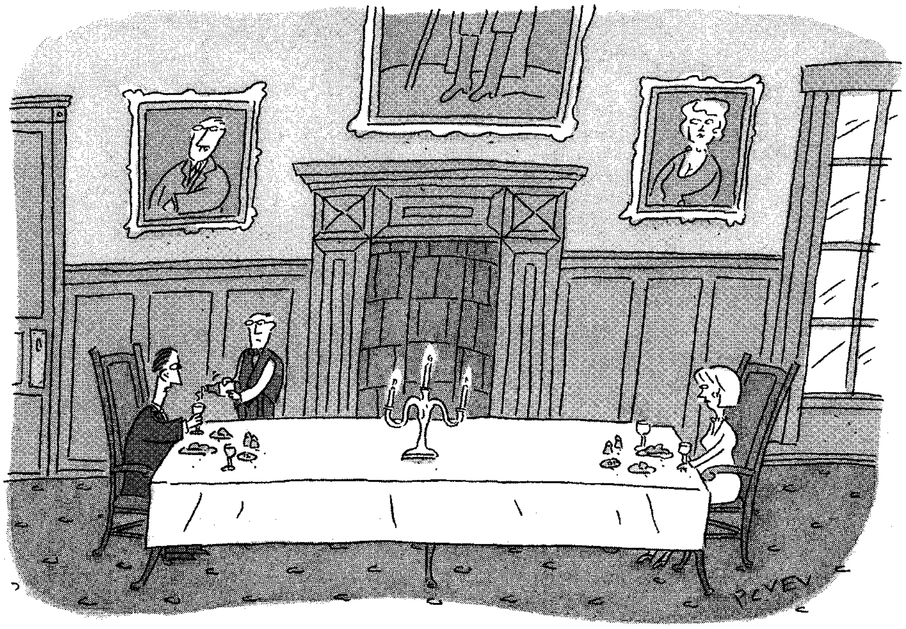
until the Brits offered him to us," Marik said. "They said, 'He was a Baathist guy until he walked in to us.' " Marik paused to explain: " 'Walked in' means that he came over to them, defected." Marik said that he had heard rumors that Allawi had served as an assassin for Saddam in Europe, killing wayward Baathists and traitors, before his own defection, but said, "I don't believe he was a hit man. I do believe he was from the Baathist intelligence directorate."

After Saddam's defeat in the Gulf War, in 1991, Allawi adopted a more public role, as the leader of a new organization, the Iraqi National Accord. Since then, Allawi said, "I've devoted all my time to Iraq." The I.N.A.'s goal was to topple Saddam by fomenting a coup led by disenfranchised Baathists and military officers. Meanwhile, his cousin Ahmad Chalabi had created a rival organization, the Iraqi National Congress, or I.N.C.—also funded by the C.I.A., and with a similar agenda. But Chalabi's strategy was different: a virulent anti-Baathist, he envisaged a popular uprising against Saddam based in northern Iraq, where he had cultivated contacts among Kurdish guerrillas.

In 1995, Chalabi's plan was approved by the C.I.A., and he assembled thousands of fighters, most of them Kurds, in northern Iraq. The plot was a disaster. Saddam sent an armored force that slaughtered Chalabi's soldiers by the hundreds. Afterward, the C.I.A. withdrew its funding from Chalabi.

Allawi's competing plan was set into motion in 1996, with White House approval and C.I.A. funding. (Khaled Shamari, now a business consultant in Baghdad, said that, in the mid-nineties, Allawi told him that the I.N.A. had received twenty-six million dollars from the United States.) Allawi claimed that he had secured contact with a cabal of Iraqi Army officers who were supposedly loyal to him. But someone apparently betrayed him. By June, Saddam had found out about the scheme and unleashed a brutal witch hunt within the military. Arrests, torture, and executions followed, and hundreds died. It was the end of the Clinton Administration's attempts to overthrow Saddam.

"I have a gripe with Allawi for a couple of reasons," Marik said. "First, Allawi started telling people, 'Chalabi is no longer the head guy with the Americans—it's us.' " Marik laughed in an exasperated way. "It was a good move, I guess, for a politician, but it didn't do much to unify the opposition. Second, he didn't do very well with this coup attempt of his, did he?" He went on, "Allawi



"This is really putting a crimp in my plan to live in the woods and survive off nothing but berries and grubs."

• •

didn't pull off the zipless coup he was asked to do. So what had he achieved? Maybe I'm missing something, but I sure don't see much."

For the rest of the nineteen-nineties, while Saddam remained in power, Chalabi and Allawi stayed in exile, supplying intelligence from their agents inside Iraq to the American and British governments and waiting for something to change. Soon after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration began planning a war against Iraq. Chalabi and Allawi resurfaced as leading figures of the suddenly revitalized Iraqi opposition. Their intelligence helped fuel the Bush and Blair governments' cases against Saddam in the prelude to the war. Much of that information was flawed. Indeed, a now discredited claim made by the British government and cited by President Bush—that Saddam could deploy weapons of mass destruction within forty-five minutes—originated from the I.N.A. The incident caused a furor in Britain. An Allawi spokesman, Nick Theros, later explained that the I.N.A. had heard this claim from a single source and passed it on to M.I.6 "in good faith."

Unlike Chalabi, who became infamous in America for having planted dubious stories about Saddam's weapons programs, Allawi somehow emerged relatively unscathed from the W.M.D.-intelligence fallout. Last spring, Chalabi's political fortunes declined further, after he was accused of sharing American intelligence secrets with Iran. U.S. troops raided his home in Baghdad and the Pentagon severed ties with him. A few weeks later, Allawi became interim Prime Minister.

His appointment was a surprise. Allawi had kept an extremely low profile during the first year of the occupation, and his well-known links to U.S. and British intelligence had damaged his reputation among Iraqis. Yet he had longstanding ties to U.S. policymakers, who trusted him. According to an American official in Baghdad who was privy to the selection process, Allawi was seen as the candidate with the fewest liabilities. "There weren't that many candidates, to be frank," the official recalled. "And it was pretty clear it had to be a Shiite." He explained that the Americans felt uncomfortable with the two other leading contenders—Shiite politicians who represented religious parties affiliated with Iran. In the end, Allawi's nomination was clinched when the members of the Iraqi Interim Governing Council unanimously endorsed him. Allawi's sudden rise from obscurity suggested an impressive degree of political instinct, not least in knowing how and when to present himself as a useful man.

The American official in Iraq who has worked closely with Allawi during the past year said that he wasn't surprised by Allawi's success. "Allawi plays his cards close to his chest, but, after all, he's a former Baathist conspirator—which is also why it's no surprise that he's no liberal democrat," he said. He laughed, then added, "He's aware that we are essential to the process. He's got good political instincts. I like him."

Robert Baer, a former C.I.A. field officer in the Middle East, suggested that much of Allawi's appeal to the Americans comes down to a matter of personality. "I don't know anyone who doesn't like Allawi," he said. "He's accommodating, a pragmatist. He's someone who challenges the Americans on their own terms, but not abrasively."

The morning after the attack on Allawi's residence, I had a breakfast meeting with Adel Abdul Mahdi, the Finance Minister. An hour earlier, another huge explosion had echoed across the city (it turned out to have been a truck bomb, which killed ten people). Mahdi is a veteran Shiite politician who has undergone a bewildering series of transformations. A Baathist in his youth, he later converted to Maoism, and is now a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, one of Iraq's main Shiite religious parties. Mahdi is a candidate in the January 30th elections. He is seeking a seat in the National Assembly as a representative of the United Iraqi Alliance, which consists of a broad coalition of Shiite parties and has been blessed by the country's most influential spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Unable to broker an alliance with the religious Shiites, Allawi is running on a separate slate, a coalition of the I.N.A. and a motley group of Sunni and Shiite followers.

Although Mahdi and Allawi are currently political rivals, Mahdi was a close friend of Allawi's during his early Baathist days, and told me that he still regarded him as a friend and as a "good man." We talked about recent events, including Allawi's recent conversation with President Bush. Mahdi said that he interpreted Allawi's phone call to Bush as a bid to buy more time to build his own party's strength. "Allawi started out strong, but he has achieved less than he was originally thought capable of," Mahdi said, explaining that he was speaking both about Allawi's performance as interim Prime Minister and about his political candidacy. "His government has achieved some things in the security arena. When he took office, both Najaf and Falluja were out of control. Now they are under the government's control. But most people still live in an insecure situation."

Mahdi said that Allawi's main weakness was his inability to broker alliances. For the elections, he said, Allawi should have forged "a national ticket" that would have united their two coalitions. Allawi, Mahdi suggested, was a man more accustomed to conspiracy than to political horse-trading. Instead of building coalitions, Mahdi said with disapproval, Allawi had focussed on helping former Baathists.

Soon after Saddam's overthrow, the Coalition Provisional Authority had banned Party members and military officers from holding government positions. This policy was meant to purify Iraq's political sphere, but it also had the effect of fuelling the insurgency—by creating a large cohort of embittered, unemployed men. Upon taking office, Allawi began reversing the ban. For example, he made plans to rehire some of Iraq's former border guards. Mahdi called such efforts "re-Baathification," and said of Allawi, "Even when he formed the I.N.A., I cannot remember anyone in it who was not a Baathist. Until the late nineteen-eighties, Allawi was still hoping to encourage the Baath Party to overthrow Saddam Hussein. . . . Some people, even some Americans, think they can bring an end to the insurgency by giving some Baathists jobs. But you need a government which is looking to the future, not made up by those who are nostalgic. We need to be clear: this is a major mistake in security policy."

An aide came into the room and handed Mahdi a yellow Post-it note with something scribbled on it. He read it and said matter-of-factly, "The mayor of Baghdad has just been assassinated. His name was Ali al-Haidari." He raised his eyebrows slightly, and said, "Another Shia."

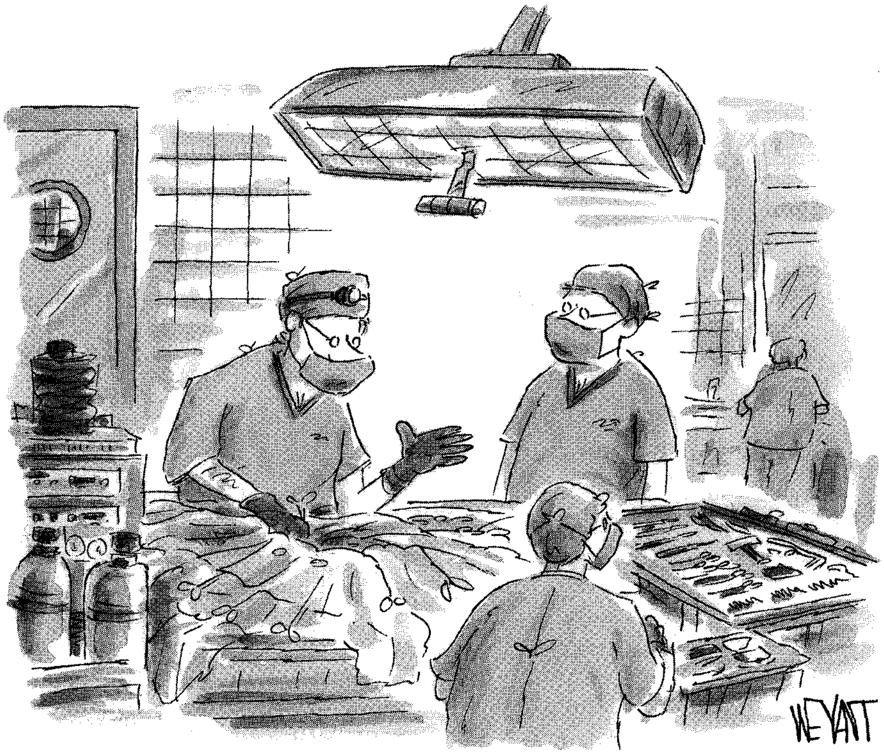
Mahdi resumed our conversation. He was adamant that the elections go ahead as scheduled. The insurgents, he said, "are trying to stop them by any means—assassinations and bombings and so forth—but still the people will be there, and this is a powerful message."

In the first week of January, I went to see Allawi at his official Baghdad residence. Guards wearing black balaclavas and wielding Kalashnikovs stood at the entrance to the road leading to his home. While the guards waited for authorization to let me through, they made my driver pull over and park. About fifteen feet away, I saw a large black splotch on the road and some skid marks next to it—the spot where the car bomber had blown himself up four days earlier.

Eventually, we were allowed through, and as policemen escorted us past concrete barriers I recognized the road as a former major boulevard that ran past Zawra Park. A neglected Ferris wheel and a number of carrousels and swings and slides stood behind the fences; the grass was yellow and overgrown. The houses on the other side of the street were palatial, but the glass in most of the windows had been blown out, no doubt by the car-bomb explosion. We passed a five-story office block with a banner that read, in English and Arabic, "Iraqi National Accord," and a little farther on we came to another roadblock.

After being frisked by some Iraqi sentries, I was shown through the gates, past more guards, and into a pleasant walled garden, where Allawi was sitting in the sun in a plastic chair. He was wearing blue pants and an olive-green corduroy shirt. His face looked tired but his eyes were alert. He asked me if I wanted coffee or tea, and called out our orders to two Asian maids. They darted across the lawn into the residence, a modern brick building. Helicopters buzzed, and some gunshots cracked in the distance.

I told him I had heard him describe his job as "horrible." "It's very tiring," he conceded. "The responsibility is huge, and it's a very difficult task, rebuilding our institutions almost from scratch." Moreover, since becoming Prime Minister he had been able to see his family only occasionally, on short visits like the one he had made to London over Christmas. When he was a member of the Interim Governing Council—when Iraq was still under the Coalition Provisional Authority—he had not considered himself such an obvious target, and his family had moved to Amman, to be nearby. "When I became Prime Minister, it seemed better for them to go back to London," he explained. He brightened, and nodded toward the house: "I have one of my daughters here with me now. She is on her school break, but has to go back soon." He told me that he had



"Spork."

two daughters, aged sixteen and fifteen, and an eight-year-old son, all from his second marriage.

I asked Allawi about his reputation as a "tough guy." He nodded. "There are many reasons for it," he said. "When I was young, I participated in various political events, including the coup of 1968. I also resisted the regime very fiercely, even when they tried to kill me. And I always talk about needing a powerful Iraq, with a strong Army—not to threaten our neighbors but to defend ourself. My crusade is to bring back our Army, restore its capability, and rebuild our intelligence capability." Speaking about his visits to Najaf during the fighting there last summer, he boasted, "I don't chicken out in the face of threats."

In conversation, Allawi is beguilingly amiable and polite. He quickly deflects conversations from topics he finds uncomfortable, and he avoids confrontation, expressing agreement whenever he finds it possible to do so. "What's nice about Allawi?" an Iraqi critical of him once asked me rhetorically, after excoriating him as untrustworthy and deceitful. "Talking to him is nice."

Allawi spoke in enthusiastic detail about his plans to build up Iraq's Army. He said that he was merging the newly formed Iraqi National Guard with the Army being trained by the Americans. And Iraq's borders would soon be more secure, he claimed, thanks to his decision to call back some of the guards who had been ousted by Paul Bremer's de-Baathification order. He emphasized that the border guards he was rehiring were the least politically involved branch of Saddam's military—"where he used to send his outcasts."

Adel Abdul Mahdi and other critics of "re-Baathification" had told me that Allawi had rehired many officers and intelligence agents who were alleged to have committed atrocities under Saddam. "I challenge you to find, in the people around me, one person who is an ideological Baathist or who has blood on his hands," Allawi said tersely. He spoke of his intelligence chief, General Shahwani, a former Baathist who had joined the I.N.A. in the mid-nineties. After the group's failed attempt to foment a coup, Allawi reminded me, Shahwani's three sons had been executed by Saddam. Allawi said that he took umbrage at any aspersions cast on a man who had paid such a high price for opposing Saddam.

Allawi said that even before the war, when he had first learned that de-Baathification was being considered for Iraq, he had argued strongly against it. The program, he said, should have been called "de-Saddamization"—and limited to Saddam's loyalists and cronies—because, in his opinion, most Iraqis who were members of the Baath Party during the Saddam years had merely used it as a "vehicle to live," a means of obtaining and keeping their jobs and other state perks.

Baathism, he said, was "finished" as an ideology. "Just like Marxism-Leninism is finished. Their time has gone." He went on, "As for the rest of it—élitism and secrecy and the use of force—there is no room for these things anymore. Now is the time for democracy and the rule of law."

When we discussed the torture and humiliation of detainees by Americans at Abu Ghraib prison, Allawi chose his words carefully. "Well, you know, it happens in war, this kind of thing," he said. "It should not, but it does. I think those responsible should be brought to justice, of course, but, you know, you can understand, under the stress of war, and in the absence of judicial processes, such events can occur. We must restore the judicial institutions so that these kinds of things don't happen. But we are now in the middle of war, we are fighting terrorism. Their minds are closed, and they are determined to cause death and destruction—not just here in Iraq but across the globe. So to draw the line on interrogating people . . . you fall into mistakes. You hold a group of suspects, you take them for investigation. Maybe some are guilty and some are innocent. In this ugly war, brought by the evil ones, innocents will always suffer."

He referred opaquely to a recent visit with an Iraqi official who, he implied, had custody of some terrorist suspects. "I saw that he had pain in his face," he recalled. "And I could see that he was being too aggressive toward the detainees. So I asked him to be calm—and, in fact, I arranged for him to go on leave, to take a break. Human emotions, you know, sometimes you can't control." He said that this was why he had resisted visiting Saddam in prison. "I might want to call him a coward, abuse him, even."

I asked him if he had ever killed anyone.

"No," he replied. "Never."

Had he ever tortured anyone or been present when people were tortured?

"No." Allawi shook his head vigorously. A moment later, he added, "But to kill in self-defense, yes. I've issued orders to my police to kill terrorists when they are unable to take them otherwise." He said that he had always opposed torture and killing, and that it was one of the things that had alienated him from Saddam. "Torture is a sign of weakness rather than strength," Allawi said. "Even going to see Saddam, for example, now—I could do it, as others have done, but I haven't. I haven't wanted to because I don't want to use my position of power to further humiliate him." He made clear that he had no sympathy for Saddam. "If he had respected himself or surrendered, I might, but the way he hid himself after destroying the country, and even after his sons were killed—this really confirmed to me that this man is only interested in himself, a coward."

Allawi discussed the common perception among Iraqis that he is an outsider, tied to Western intelligence interests. "I am my own man," he said. "I was one of the last members of the opposition to make links with the United States." He stressed that even after he had received American backing he had always spoken his mind. "I was the only one who spoke out and wrote against de-Baathification, for instance, even before the war," he said. When he learned that the postwar disbandment of Iraq's Army was being discussed, he added, he had attacked the idea in meetings with political leaders in the United States and neighboring countries such as Turkey. "I spoke out," he said. "I always thought if there was a vacuum it would be dangerous."

On Saturday, January 8th, Allawi was to meet with a group of Sunni sheikhs in the Green Zone and invited me to join him. He told me it was part of his "Sunni outreach" effort—an attempt

HOMAGE TO WANG WEI

An unfamiliar woman sleeps on the other side
of the bed. Her faint breathing is like a secret
alive inside her. They had known each other
three days in California four years ago. She was
engaged and got married afterwards. Now the winter
is taking down the last of the Massachusetts leaves.
The two o'clock Boston & Maine goes by,
calling out of the night like trombones rejoicing,
leaving him in the silence after. She cried yesterday
when they walked in the woods, but she didn't want
to talk about it. Her suffering will be explained,
but she will be unknown nevertheless. Whatever happens,
he will not find her. Despite the tumult and trespass
they might achieve in the wilderness of their bodies
and the voices of the heart clamoring, they will still
be a mystery each to the other, and to themselves.

—*Jack Gilbert*

to placate leaders from the Iraqi community most hostile to the U.S. occupation. The program was also a savvy political gesture. By presenting himself to the Sunnis as a figure of consensus as well as a man of resolve, he was positioning himself as a mainstream politician—and a safe choice for Prime Minister.

That afternoon, one of Allawi's aides picked me up in a car a few blocks from his residence. A hundred or more sheikhs were climbing into a small fleet of minibuses nearby, many of them dressed in tribal finery—embroidered robes and head scarves. Led by several S.U.V.s filled with security men—among them was Allawi's American bodyguard, whom I had last seen in Amman—we proceeded in a convoy down the road. Within a few hundred feet we came to a high walled gate guarded by American soldiers; we were entering the Green Zone by the back door. "This is the V.I.P. entrance," Allawi's man remarked. We drove past the former Baath Party Congress headquarters and came to a roadblock manned by American soldiers. After we were allowed past, one of the soldiers on the road quipped loudly to a friend, "It's the Baath Party coming through!" Allawi's man laughed.

The convoy arrived at a ten-story building that functions as the official headquarters of the Iraqi Interim Government. Nepalese Ghurkas guarded the perimeter, and several Americans, some in uniform and some in civilian clothes, stood around the entrance. One American asked Allawi's deputy security adviser if the sheikhs should be subjected to a body search. "No, it is all right. They are our guests," the adviser said. Looking a little uncertain, the American backed off.

We filed into a conference room inside the building and took seats that had been set up in rows in front of several ornate couches. In the front row sat a trio of senior Sunni clerics wearing fezzes wrapped in turban cloth. Others wore black-and-white checked kaffiyehs; a man in front of me had on a fine camel-hair robe. About a third of the guests wore Western suits, and most of the older men had dyed their hair and their mustaches black, following Iraqi custom. After several minutes, Allawi entered, and there was a friendly murmur of greeting. Allawi smiled. He was wearing a tailored English blazer. After greeting the assemblage, he sat down on one of the couches, with his public-security minister, Qassem Daud, nearby. Daud accompanies Allawi at most of his public appearances, and although he rarely says anything, he is regarded as Allawi's right-hand man.

The first to speak was Dr. Adnan Muhammad Salman, an eighty-year-old senior Sunni cleric and the oldest man in the room. Allawi was deferential to him; I was told that he was the Iraqi in charge of organizing the annual hajj, a symbolically important role in Muslim religious circles. The old man said that he thought the *moqawama*—"the resistance," which is the term that many Sunnis use for the insurgents in Iraq—was justified. He added that he thought "criminals," and not the *moqawama*, were responsible for the more notorious kidnappings. He complained about the lack of security in Iraq, and the inadequate electricity supply—"It is worse than ever today"—and asked for a postponement of the elections. When Salman was finished, he apologized for speaking so bluntly, and asked Allawi not to be angry with him. Allawi cheerfully demurred.

Another man spoke, introducing himself as a member of the council for the northern governorate of Salahuddin, which encompasses Saddam's home town of Tikrit. "Iraqis have been through four wars" in the past twenty-five years, he began, "and their hearts are wounded. People are sad and angry and living in darkness, and cannot see the light. . . . The government needs to explain better what it's doing and where it's going. People need jobs." He argued that it was unfair that the oil pipeline that bisected his province was being protected by American and European security companies, and asked, "Couldn't this be done by Iraqis?" He told Allawi that the people in his area were split over the election issue: there were those who thought it would be useful and those who thought it wouldn't. He concluded by saying, "Fuck the occupation!"

The sheikhs in the audience laughed, but Allawi did not join them. He led the way into an adjacent dining room, where a table was set for lunch. Over a meal of rice, mutton, hummus, and olives, I talked with a sheikh from Falluja who, when I asked him how things were in his city, told me, "It's been ruined." His and his brother's homes had been destroyed, he said. There was a lot of tension between residents and the American and Iraqi soldiers. He had disagreed with Allawi's decision to order the assault on Falluja in November, but when I asked him what he thought of Allawi he said, "He's a good man," as if he assumed that this was what I wanted to hear. He evaded my attempts to find out if he planned to vote for Allawi, but finally said, "We see only the outside of Allawi. We've met with him many times, but we don't know what's in his heart, and we don't know what's behind his back." He held up his left hand, and I saw that he was missing three fingers. "I lost these fingers and three brothers fighting in the Iran-Iraq War," he said. "With all of that, I never felt afraid. But I do now. We are scared about the future."

After lunch, the sheikhs returned to the conference room. Suddenly, the main door opened and John Dimitri Negroponte, the American Ambassador to Iraq, walked in, followed by five U.S. senators—Majority Leader Bill Frist, of Tennessee; Majority Whip Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky; Norm Coleman, of Minnesota; Mike DeWine, of Ohio; and Mary Landrieu, of Louisiana, who was the only Democrat in the group and the only woman in the room. Allawi greeted them, introduced them, and seated Landrieu on his right and Frist on his left, on the main couch facing the sheikhs. Speaking in English, Allawi told the senators that the sheikhs were "from the Sunni areas." Switching back to Arabic, Allawi encouraged the sheikhs to stand up and express their views. Several did so, with a couple of Allawi's aides, at a crackly microphone, improvising as simultaneous translators.

The first man to speak complained about the behavior of American military troops, noting their tendency to make arbitrary arrests, and said, "Iraqis are now afraid when they hear the word 'American.'" He asked for help in creating jobs, explaining that unemployed men were easy recruits for terrorists. The senators listened attentively—Frist gave the impression of being rapt; Landrieu's face was frozen in a smile—although at times they appeared confounded by the mangled translations. Another speaker, who identified himself as a Kurd from Mosul, fulminated briefly and disjointedly about the Iranian threat against Iraq. The third speaker inspired laughter among his fellow-sheikhs when he broke into English, proclaiming, "We don't want occupation—we want liberation." The senators smiled politely. Just then, a violent shudder from a nearby explosion caused the windows of the room to rattle for a long moment, as in an earthquake.

Allawi seemed to feel that the senators had heard enough. He invited Bill Frist to address the crowd. The Senator introduced himself and his four companions as "the representatives of two hundred and seventy million Americans," and then compared the proceedings he had just witnessed with the discourse of the U.S. Senate, where every day he and other senators "exchanged opinions" and "shared emotions."

He went on, "The timing of the election is an Iraqi decision. And we are here to support you. We do think, although it is your decision, that the timing of the January 30th election is important. We know it may not be perfect—ours aren't—and that is a part of democracy and freedom. But we see these elections as an important first step in that process, and one that will lead to a greater American commitment to Iraq's development and to the education and opportunities and jobs you want." When he finished, twenty or thirty of the sheikhs clapped perfunctorily. Allawi rose to his feet and guided the senators out of the room.

"Never, ever, drink on an empty wallet."

He returned a few minutes later and called for all the representatives from Mosul to join him for a talk behind closed doors. With upward of three million people, Mosul is Iraq's second-largest city, and ever since the November assault on Falluja it has become the new epicenter of the insurgency. All week long, there had been rumors about plans for a large-scale American military assault on the city, and I gathered that this was the reason for the special conclave. About twenty men followed Allawi into the dining room, which had been transformed into a conference room. Allawi sat at the head of a long U-shaped table draped with yellow cloth. Qassem Daud, as always, sat beside him. One of Allawi's senior aides expressed concerned about my presence, but Allawi indicated that I could stay.

A man began talking forcefully to Allawi about how the resistance movement in Mosul was somewhat legitimate, since it was opposing the occupation. He promised that the violence would stop if the Americans would only leave. Allawi interrupted him with a challenge: "Why do you say 'occupation'? Who is the occupation? What will happen if the Americans leave? If they do, and the terrorists take over, you will be the first to call for Bush—for Bush's mother—to rescue you!" He chuckled.

Another man began arguing with Allawi. "The resistance has many supporters in Mosul," he said. He said that the real problem in Mosul was the power of the Kurds. "In Mosul we would prefer any forces, Americans or British—anybody but the Kurds. The occupation in Mosul is Kurdish."

Allawi replied, "We have only a couple of choices. The first is to leave things the way they are, in trouble—this is not a good choice. The second choice is that the people of Mosul can behave well with themselves and one another, and there can be security and stability. I used to fight for freedom and independence. I knew what I was fighting for, what it was that I wanted. What do you want? Is it Saddam you want back? Saddam likes this fighting that is occurring. As for the Americans, this is the reality: we can't protect ourselves right now because we are weak, so the Americans are here to protect us. Ten per cent of the people are poisoning life for everyone there, and we want to cut out the poison. We don't want to use force, but we can't allow the situation to continue. I have many friends in Mosul, clean people, such as yourselves. Is it government jobs that people there want? If so, I am ready to provide them."

Another sheikh began speaking. He held a plastic folder that he explained was full of papers signed by former military and intelligence people who were out of jobs and who, in his words, "felt abandoned." Allawi pointed to the folder and, smiling, said, "So are you going to give that to me or is it an intelligence file?" He laughed, and so did the men from Mosul. The sheikh said he would give him a copy. "Good," Allawi said, looking satisfied. The sheikh also looked pleased, as if the two of them had just struck a mutually beneficial deal, and he said, "There is another very important reason to keep a lid on things in Mosul, which is that many people, ex-intelligence and ex-military, will come over to you if you give them a job." Allawi nodded.

"Why did you bring us here—to eat and drink, or to come up with solutions?" another man asked. "I will give you the solution for Mosul: withdraw the Americans."

"How can I?" Allawi replied.

"Tell the Americans to withdraw and I promise you I will get all the tribal leaders to divide up the city by sections and control the place. I promise you there will be no more trouble."

Allawi smiled, but did not reply. Another sheikh, who was sitting closer to Allawi, said, in a tone of friendly deprecation, "If you withdraw the Americans, you'll find no one to control the city."

Everyone laughed, except the sheikh he was addressing. Allawi replied, banteringly, "O.K., bring the sheikhs to me and I'll tell the Americans to withdraw." He chuckled again. The men from Mosul laughed. Allawi rose to his feet, and so did everyone else. The meeting was over.

Several days after Allawi's meeting with the Sunni sheikhs, Ambassador Negroponte met with me in his office in Saddam's old Republican Palace, inside the Green Zone. Negroponte's tenure in Iraq, which began upon the departure of Paul Bremer, last June, had coincided with the premiership of Allawi. When Iraqi sovereignty was transferred to Allawi, the Coalition Provisional Authority was formally replaced by the U.S. Embassy. Unlike Bremer, who was a ubiquitous, assertive presence in Iraq during his fourteen months as C.P.A. administrator, Negroponte has been unobtrusive, allowing Allawi to become the public face of the occupation.

Negroponte praised Allawi's performance in office. "All the institutions of the state were either destroyed or crumbled in the wake of the invasion, and then the C.P.A. took over," he said. "But there wasn't much to work with when he took over. He's had to build a government. He's begun the process of building a new Iraqi Army, but it's a lot slower than he'd like. He's done much to restore Iraq's credibility with its neighbors, and he's conducted pretty effective diplomacy." He went on, "He thinks a lot about democracy. But I've noticed that there's a curious blend between him being anti-Saddam and the belief that Iraqis need to be ruled with a strong hand. He really wants that strong Army. He thinks that if he'd had a real Army the Falluja uprising would never have taken place. He could've sent in tanks to put it down."

Although Allawi's tenure would officially end on January 30th, he would remain a central figure in Iraqi politics, Negroponte said. "I think that in the last six months he's made a transition from revolutionary exile to national politician. I certainly think that, and I think that's the way he's viewed by Iraqis, too," he added. "He's very good at trying to think through how various constituencies will react to a particular policy."

The Iraqis I spoke with tended to view Allawi with both detachment and respect. No one seemed to support him passionately, and most people felt that they still didn't know him very well. They regarded him as a cunning pragmatist—a tough, capable man who had made the most of his relationship with the C.I.A. Allawi's good standing with U.S. officials seemed to mean a lot to most Iraqis I spoke with, many of whom also believed that the Americans were determined to keep Allawi in office.

Negroponte dismissed this idea. He said, "Does Allawi have more to contribute? Yes, I think, definitely. Is he the only one? No. The Iraqis are going to have to work that one out."

A prominent Iraqi politician, who is running for the National Assembly as a member of the religious Shiite coalition, told me that the Americans had quietly let the leading candidates know that there were three conditions that they expected the next Iraqi government to meet. "One, it should not be under the influence of Iran," he said. "Two, it should not ask for the withdrawal of American troops. And, three, it should not install an Islamic state." His Shiite coalition was projected to win a plurality of votes in the elections, and if it does, it will play a decisive role in choosing the country's next leader. The candidate speculated that the victorious Shiites might well ask Allawi, rather than a religious cleric, to be Prime Minister. Such a gesture might help persuade the Americans and the Sunnis that the Shiites were not intent on establishing a theocracy. "If Iyad stays in the job, it could well be by default again," he said. It would certainly make the Americans happy, he added. "The Americans have known this man for the past twenty-five years. They want someone they can rely on. Iyad is the devil they know."

During a final conversation with Allawi, I suggested that he seemed comfortable with the power that the Americans had bestowed on him. He replied, "It's a role that we have to have in Iraq—it's the culture. You have to be powerful, you have to project your views in a powerful way, you have to—in the face of challenges and threats—stand tall and strong. If you give way in any way, the whole society will be destroyed. When you have to deal with terrorists, you have to deal with them in a very strong way. There is no middle-of-the-road solution." He paused, then explained, "This is because of my background. You know, when you are a doctor in an operating theatre facing a sick patient, you have to make the best decision and you have to take risks. There is no middle road." ♦

LETTER FROM EUROPE

BLOOD SPORT

How foxhunting became the most divisive issue in England.

BY JANE KRAMER

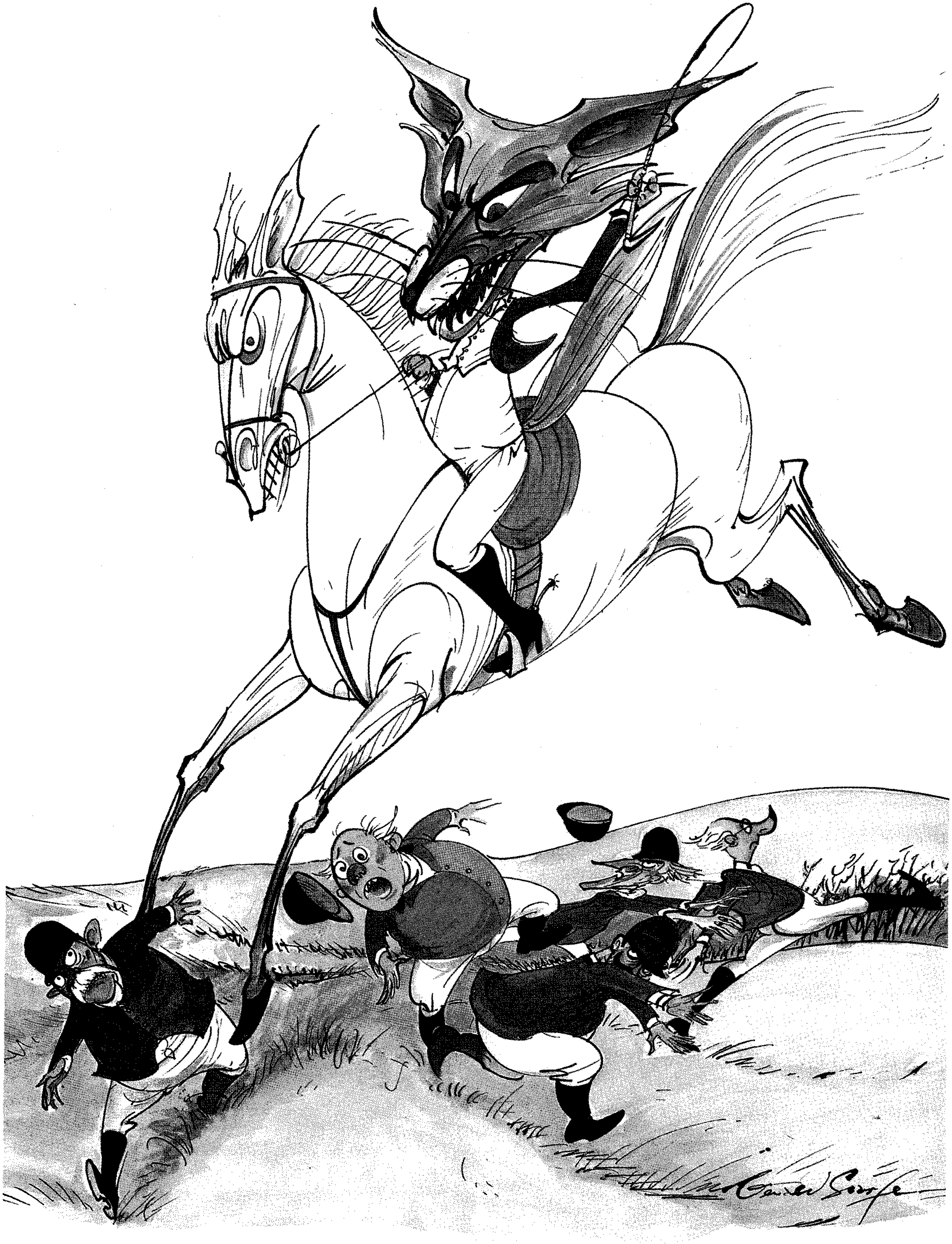
Eleven o'clock on a Saturday morning in a field in Gloucestershire. The field is muddy. The hounds and the hunters are getting muddy. The sun hides, pale behind a drizzling November rain. The drink in everybody's flask is sloe gin. The food of choice seems to be sausage rolls. And, while the horses are splendid, the livery handsome, and the house at the end of the drive palatial, the opening meet of the Beaufort Hunt, England's fanciest foxhunt, in what is likely to be its final season, is nothing as grand as the hunts you see on the lacquered placemats at a New York dinner party. For one thing, the eleventh Duke of Beaufort and honorary Master of the Hunt is missing, either home with the flu or shooting pheasant, or, perhaps, hiding from hunt protesters and saboteurs. And it is Beaufort who owns the enormous house—Badminton House—and the stables with eighty stalls and the rooting terriers and the hundred and forty-eight foxhounds of the Beaufort pack and the fifty thousand bucolic acres through which a couple of hundred riders are about to gallop in pursuit of a fox that would no doubt otherwise be shot by the next farmer whose chicken coop it invaded. For another thing, the Prince of Wales and Camilla Parker Bowles, stalwarts of the Beaufort Hunt, are also missing. Their own house, Highgrove, is a ten-minute drive, but today the Prince is riding with a Derbyshire hunt, somewhere isolated and obscure, perhaps on orders from Buckingham Palace. The Palace believes that, in view of the foxhunting ban that is almost certain to pass the House of Commons in the next two weeks and, barring an injunction, go into effect in mid-February, it would be unseemly for the heir to the British throne to be seen hunting, let alone squandering the money it is said to cost Gloucestershire's taxpayers to protect him every time he hunts at Badminton.

The hunt is actually quite homey and congenial. "We moved here knowing almost nobody, and because we hunted—well, look at this," Carlyn Chisholm, who has invited me for the weekend, says. And it is definitely local, if you count the weekenders, down from London, as local. Farmers ride free in the Beaufort Hunt. Everybody else on horseback can afford a sport that, at Badminton, often means two trained horses at the ready, your own stables, and the services of a good groom, not to mention the cost of feed, vets, blacksmiths, insurance, boots and clothes, and the hunt itself: fifteen hundred pounds per horse for a season subscription. This is what separates the riders from so many of the hunt followers, dressed for the day in mufflers, waterproof hats, and Wellies, who are milling about the field in front of an old Badminton gatehouse and who will track the hunt on foot, or in Land Rovers or trucks, or on quad bikes. But "afford" is a thorny word, as every woman with a good hairdresser knows. A foxhunting family will live on shepherd's pie to be able to ride out in the proper kit, and at a hunt like the Beaufort that can include a velvet helmet, from Patey, hardened from great vats of shellac and molded to the shape of your head, boots from Horace Batten, and a bespoke hunting coat that can run you six or seven hundred pounds. More, if the Duke favors you with an invitation to wear the Beaufort family livery—deep-blue coat, buff silk facings—with your buff breeches.

But none of this matters once the hunt master blows his horn, and the horses and hounds start moving across the field toward a low stone wall, dissolving into a ribbon of motion, and the air fills with the thump of cantering hooves and the whoosh of a hundred paws—and your heart catches, because, whatever you feel about foxes' rights or blood sports or primogeniture or the class war, or even placemats, the hunt is beautiful. "To see the horses and hounds in motion, it does make the back of your hair stand up—it gives you a bit of a buzz," Tony Pellett, a village liveryman who boards some of the horses in the Beaufort Hunt, says with a sigh, when the meet is over and he's back at his stables, worrying about what will happen to those horses and hounds if the hunt is banned. "You know the emotion that music brings?" Benjamin Mancroft, another stalwart of the Beaufort, tells me a few days later, limping into the bar at the House of Lords, with what he describes as "a hoofprint in my back." He has had a bad fall, but he thinks that the long corridors at the Lords—which is trying to save foxhunting with as much determination as the Commons is trying to stop it—will put him in shape for the hunt next weekend. "I don't know why," Lord Mancroft says, "but the sound of the hounds running engenders that same emotion in me. It's music. It moves me to tears."

People who hunt say that foxhunting or stag hunting with hounds—England's traditional mounted hunts—is "about community," because so much of the country's rural population not only follows the hunt but, directly or indirectly, earns a living from it. Labour Party backbenchers say no, it's an abhorrent, élitist practice, the last vestige of an England run entirely for the benefit of the upper class. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals says that it terrifies foxes and makes them suffer even before the hounds reach them, and the League Against Cruel Sports says that "there's no such thing as a 'freedom' to chase and kill for sport." The hunters say that the manner and care and ritual with which a fox is hunted do honor to the animal. The left-wing press is against foxhunting. ("If you mean putting a stop to the privilege of a small group of toffs who get their pleasure watching a fox torn apart by dogs, I'd say that's progress," David Walker, at the *Guardian*, told me.) The right-wing press is for it. ("Of all cruelties, this is not very cruel," Simon Jenkins, at the *Times*, said. "I disapprove of it, but I would leave it in place. And, on libertarian grounds, I'd de-

GERALD SCARFE



More Britons are said to have demonstrated over foxhunting than over any other issue, with the possible exception of the Iraq war.

"I never said we were exclusive. Think of me as a time-share."

• •

fend to the death your right to do it.")

In fact, with the exception of Prime Minister Tony Blair—who, eight years ago, promised the Labour Party a free vote on banning hunting, and since then has prayed that the issue would go away—most Englishmen have something to say about foxhunting, and it doesn't matter whether those Englishmen ride to hounds three or four times a week in Beaufort livery or learn their husbandry from a poodle, underexercised and adored, in a two-room flat on the sixteenth floor of a London apartment block. Between May of 1997, the month of the Blair landslide that ended eighteen years of Tory rule, and November of 2004, when the ban was passed, more British citizens were said to have demonstrated for or against foxhunting—four hundred and seven thousand hunters in one demonstration—than over any other issue, with the possible exception of the Iraq war. And Parliament itself spent two hundred and seventy-five hours debating it.

There are about two hundred foxhunts and stag hunts in England and Wales, forty more if you count Scotland and Northern Ireland. Seventy thousand people—men, women, and children—ride in them. More than a million people follow them. Eight thousand people work directly for them. There are twenty thousand foxhounds and deerhounds in the country's hunting packs, and nearly sixty thousand horses in its hunt stables. And, while most polls showed that sixty per cent of the population was in favor of a ban, the hunters dispute this. Some hunters say that the results would have been much more accurate had the pollsters included questions about civil liberties and wise land use and the economic consequences of putting hunt communities out of work. Not that the polls changed many minds in Parliament. "There was never a stalemate like this one," Larry Whitty, the Labour peer who is Lord Minister in the catchall ministry (agriculture, rural affairs transport, fisheries, environment) that covers hunting, told me. "In normal negotiations, each side moves slightly toward the other's viewpoint, but not here. Here, it's been Commons against Lords."

The House of Lords, including more than half the Labour lords, voted overwhelmingly against the ban. The House of Commons, including six Tories, voted overwhelmingly for it. (The Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Home Secretary, and the Foreign Secretary, no fools they, abstained.) The two houses were so stubbornly opposed on the subject of foxhunting that, to break the stalemate, the Speaker of the Commons had to invoke a seldom used act, the Parliament Act of 1949, which affirms the primacy of "the people" over the peerage. But whatever the peers or the pols may have said about banning foxhunts, most people felt that it had very little to do with foxes. It was a "totemic issue," as Tony Banks, a Labour backbencher (and animal-rights enthusiast) from the working-class London borough of West Ham, put it. He had coined the phrase and used it in every conversation, including his conversation with me. But it may have been more revealing than he intended, because, at the end of the day, neither Banks nor anyone else I talked to could explain why Labour would settle so eagerly for a totem when its real issues—the war, housing, immigration policy, the state of the country's schools and roads and hospitals—were so often slighted or ignored.

Tony Blair has now been in power for the better part of two consecutive terms, and his parliamentary majority is so large—a hundred and sixty seats—that, until foxes got involved, he and a small circle of ministers were able to run England from the sitting room at 10 Downing Street, with very close to a free hand. ("Sofa government," people in London say.) Blair invented the idea of New Labour, which is to say that he promised to bring Labour, and with it Britain, into the modern world by introducing them both to the political center—to the kind of new-money-and-liberal-values meritocracy that Bill Clinton was espousing in America. But most of the M.P.s who gave him that large majority were decidedly Old Labour: trade unionist, populist, and socialist—the kind of politicians who grew up on the ideology of the welfare state and the class struggle and, as often as not, were elected from industrial, working-class constituencies.

For a while, the P.M. and his party got along. He took the Bank of England out of the hands of the Government, which controlled it, and gave it the authority to set interest rates. He took the House of Lords, with more than seven hundred seats, and reduced the number of hereditary peers to ninety-two, oversaw the appointment of twenty-two new, independent, "crossbench" peers, and paved the way for the eventual transformation of the Lords into a council of appointed experts—all of which, rather disturbingly, has made it a more interesting house than the democratically elected one. He gave parliaments to Scotland and Wales. He supported a law that assured everybody the "right to roam" through the British countryside.

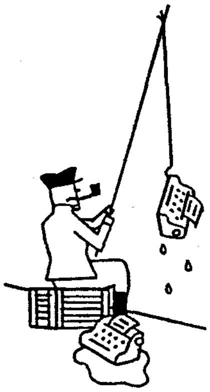
But he also persuaded the Commons to accept his decision to send British troops to fight in Iraq, on Washington's murky evidence of weapons of mass destruction; undermined (if you ask his backbenchers) the state education system by legalizing charter schools and weakened the National Health System by licensing self-governing, sink-or-swim "foundation" hospitals; and instituted tuition fees at the country's colleges and universities. Old Labourites voted with the Government, mainly because without Blair's moving toward the center on issues like that there wouldn't have *been* a Labour government, even if it wasn't the government they had expected, or, more to the point, their voters had expected. But they needed something to take home to their constituencies, something to let everybody know that they were still waging the class war and even looking after the country's furry animals—loving and protecting animals being at least as much of a British obsession as hunting them. (It's hard to imagine another country where photographs of particularly fulsome hogs appear regularly on the front page of every paper, or, for that matter, where a government report on the practice of hunting with dogs, completed in 2000, reflects at length on whether "this experience"—of a bite to the neck—"seriously compromises the welfare of the fox.")

"I think it's worth remembering that we in the Government didn't consider this a matter of high priority," Alun Michael, the beleaguered minister for Rural Affairs, told me two days before the vote to ban. "But, while people say it's not an important issue, the fact remains that the chamber empties whenever the debate isn't about hunting. And this kind of thing affects the individual M.P.s." The human-rights activist Frances D'Souza, a crossbench peer who was against the ban, put it this way: "This was a fight between 10 Downing and the backbenchers. It was about challenging Tony Blair. Blair's decision to go to war was made without consultation—all his decisions were. The House of Commons has been a very unhappy body." And the columnist Jane Shilling—who has written a book about riding to hounds with a Kent farmers' hunt called the Ashford Valley and is, by her own admission, one of the I'll-eat-shepherd's-pie foxhunters—said, "For Blair, this ban was like a bucking horse. It ran away with him."

Shilling and I were talking over sandwiches at a country pub called the Woolpack Inn—her hunt had assembled in the Woolpack's parking lot—but our conversation had begun a few days after I arrived in London. We had talked then about the turnout at protest demonstrations, and she had said, "You'll see at the hunt, there is this huge caesura between town and country. The town now sees the country as 'leisure'—it's the country as theme park—and of course the town feels entitled to leisure, to its right to roam." She thought that the Labour backbenchers were demonizing hunting as a sport that kept the countryside a preserve of other people's entitlement, something that excluded them, something that put the priorities of a small community of toffs over the community of working British citizens. And never mind that the farmers who rode out from the Woolpack's lot were also working British citizens, and that they thought of hunting as part of the "right to roam" of their community.

Old Labourites don't believe in the community of the hunt, and it has to be said that, in the case of grand hunts like the Beaufort, they have a small point, because the ritual of the hunt, however democratic—with the lord giving way to the tradesman or the tenant farmer who gets to the wall or the hedgerow first—is also a ritual of the old order. And, in a way, the fact that they meet as equals to pursue a fox or a deer for a few hours is compelling mainly in that they rarely meet as equals on any other occasion (except, lately, at demonstrations). Of course, it could also be said that the Old Labourites owe these refinements of class consciousness to a hunter's patronage. Friedrich Engels was an ardent hunter, as rhapsodic about the sport as R. S. Surtees or Siegfried Sassoon. ("I went foxhunting on Saturday, seven hours in the saddle," he famously wrote to his friend Karl Marx. "Such a thing always excites me hellishly for a few days, it is the most magnificent physical pleasure I know. . . . I was in at the kill.") And if it weren't for Engels, riding to hounds, getting rich from the family's Manchester textile factories, and sending bank drafts to Marx—who was in his carrel at the British Museum, avoiding "the idiocy of rural life" and writing "Das Kapital"—Labour backbenchers might not even be around.

In 1835, the British banned bearbaiting, cockfighting, and dog fighting—the three blood sports of the urban working class. And one of the reasons they did was that the rural gentry then controlling Parliament decided that killing games in small, closed, city places—cellars, courtyards, back alleys—were bad for poor people, exciting their basest instincts and encouraging them to lives of drink, gambling, violence, and all manner of Dickensian dissipation. Hunting, on the other hand, was healthy and uplifting. And it was fashionable. I doubt that very many people in England seriously want to bring back bearbaiting, or to spend their evenings watching two roosters rip each other apart. But Old Labour keeps track of the history of discrimination, and it has bred a furious resentment. For many working-class Britons, the ban on foxhunting is their revenge. Some go all the way back to the royal hunt that trampled Oliver Cromwell's uncle's farm. Most of them simply call the ban their "payback for the miners"—by which they mean that Margaret Thatcher, in the early eighties, abandoned the country's foundering collieries, and did it without shedding a tear of pity for the communities where thousands of coal miners and their families lived. The miners clung to their pit villages, however miserable, out of an attachment to home that had no place in the "get up, go South, find yourself a new job" ethos in Mrs. Thatcher's vision of reform. They struck for a year. Their demands were outrageous, their desperation clear—and their defeat a given. Most of the mines closed.



In the twenty years since then, Labour backbenchers have introduced nearly a dozen bills to ban foxhunting and stag hunting, and the fate of the miners has figured in the rhetoric of every attempt to get them passed. Even John Jackson, the chairman of Britain's biggest association of hunters and hunt supporters, the Countryside Alliance, says that "the destruction of the miners' communities then was like the destruction we in the countryside face now." (In fact, it was much worse.) Jackson is not a hunter. He is a lawyer, with a couple of Cambridge degrees, who regards the right to hunt as a "fundamental libertarian issue." "Blair never intended this ban," he told me. "The Labour managers said to Blair, 'If the backbenchers don't get hunting, they'll block us in *our* bills' . . . and those backbenchers are old-fashioned class warriors, foolish and deeply prejudiced. And they have long memories."

In the first session of Blair's first term, a Labour member named Michael Foster, with promises of considerable financial help from the animal-rights lobby, introduced a bill calling for a total ban on hunting with dogs. The hunt supporters in the Commons stalled it—the session ended before a vote was called—and the Lords would have returned it anyway, which is what they did whenever a hunting bill circled through Parliament during the next five years. Then, in 2002, with Labour's majority still strong, Alun Michael introduced a compromise bill that would have retained hunting, but at the discretion of a national licensing board. The backbenchers, assured by the Government that this was the best it could do, might have accepted the bill, but the Lords refused even to negotiate the licensing terms, and rejected it out of hand. It was an arrogant mistake, and a call to war to the backbenchers, who this time rallied behind Tony Banks and a Manchester M.P. by the name of Gerald Kaufman.

Banks, an admitted populist with a weakness for what he calls "high-profile campaigns," spoke for the furry-animal members. He told people that it wouldn't matter to him if every man and woman in the Transport and General Workers Union rode with a foxhunt. He was against it. "We are an obnoxious species" is what he told me when I stopped to see him. "Hunters need help, and the best way to help them is to stop hunting." (Helping people that way has come to be standard Labour practice; last year, the Government sponsored a "smacking" bill and gave away six hundred thousand pounds to a group called the Anti-Bullying Alliance.) Kaufman, for his part, spoke for the members who are less gratified by loving animals than by loathing Tories, though he did manage to send out leaflets with a picture of himself in the company of two men dressed up in deer and fox costumes, and he still boasts about being the ace of diamonds in the Countryside Alliance's "Pack of Prejudice" playing cards. Kaufman was a junior minister in two Labour governments, and then his career was stopped in its tracks by the eighteen years of Tory rule. He is quite openly vindictive. "Of course it's a class issue," he told me. "It's an issue of principle: the House of Lords gives way to the House of Commons. Blair, when I went to talk to him about it, said, 'Gerald, I thought you were interested in the big issues.' But this *is* a big issue."

Kaufman wants to be known as the man who got the toffs where it hurt most, in the seat of their riding breeches (though he's been knighted, and signs his letters with a Sir). He made this clear in September, at the annual Labour Conference, in Brighton. Anne Mallalieu, a Labour peer and the president of the Countryside Alliance, told me that the Brighton delegates were quite abusive to the hunters who came to protest. (She was one of the protesters.) Some of the delegates smashed the Countryside Alliance stand; some hurled insults at the hunters demonstrating outside. Kaufman himself, writing in the *Guardian* on the last day of the conference, called the hunters "racist, foul-mouthed, brutalised, larcenous scum." (He said they had shouted anti-Semitic taunts at him.) It's worth noting that the hunters were no less abusive than the pols. A group of hunters joined the Labour Party in order to get themselves into the conference hall and disrupt the meetings. (They were arrested.) Demonstrators from one hunt deposited a dead horse in the street near the conference hall. (Their worst punishment was no hunting for a month.) Two weeks earlier, eight hunters—including a professional polo player who rides with the Beaufort Hunt and the hunt-master son of the rock star Bryan Ferry—had dressed up as construction workers and (perhaps with some inside help) got past the guards at the Commons. By the time *they* were arrested, they had managed to harangue the Rural Affairs minister in front of a dozen television cameras. Their exuberance was not appreciated. "This has been the stupidest campaign I ever saw," Simon Jenkins told me. "You don't storm the Parliament. You don't march to the Parliament with horses and dogs and pink coats. You march about child poverty. About the Iraq war."

This fall, with the ban on the table, the Lords blocked an amendment to delay its enforcement for eighteen months, in order to allow for the disposition of the horses and hounds and to give hunt staffs the chance to find other work. This was something that Blair, a masterly opportunist, wanted. Or, rather, he wanted to get Labour, and himself, safely past the next elections, which have to be held sometime before May next year, without losing any pro-hunt votes. But some lords worried that in eighteen months people might start getting used to the ban, or, worse, forget it. And what nearly all of them wanted, short of no ban, was to force the use of the Parliament Act and see a ban in effect now. Fifty-six thousand hunters, with the blessing of the Countryside Alliance, had already signed a pledge to continue hunting and then present themselves "to justice" at their local police stations, and the Lords figured that the faster this happened the better the odds for the ban being overturned. The alliance itself was planning an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that the ban violates the E.U.'s human-rights convention. (This is not a case the hunters are likely to win.) And it had hired Sir Sydney Kentridge, the country's most eminent constitutional lawyer, to appeal for a judicial review of the ban at home. Its argument was that the Parliament Act of 1949 is itself illegal, being an amended act that, in its original form, contained no provisions for amendment, as well as an act that had passed Parliament without the consent of the House of Lords. It is unlikely that Kentridge, who spent the better part of his career defending political prisoners in South Africa, cares a whit about foxhunting. But he does care about the law, and he knows that legal scholars have been waiting a long time for someone to take a crack at the Parliament Act. His appeal—the first challenge to the Parliament Act in fourteen years—has generated so much legal interest that the hunters may get a reprieve in spite of themselves and even in spite of the backbenchers. A few days before the Boxing Day meets—traditionally the biggest meets of the season—the

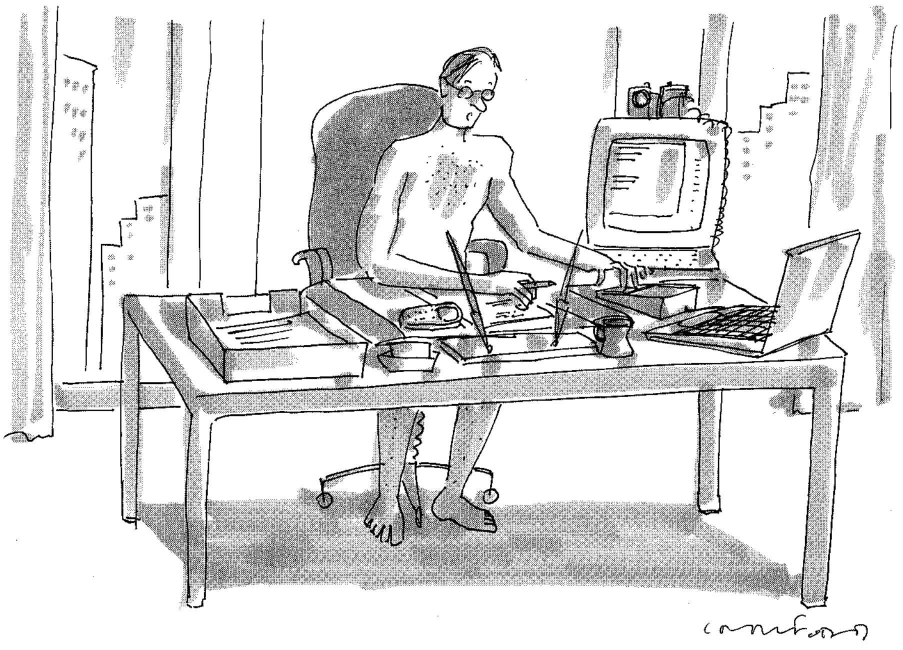
Attorney General let it be known that he would not object to the alliance seeking an injunction on the ban, pending the results of all judicial reviews. No one knows what will happen. But, for once, the hunters and the backbenchers can agree on something: the Prime Minister may be having the last word, and having it both ways.

It was the French who introduced England to the mounted hunt. This is not a detail the English usually bring up, until you hunt with them and try to follow the hunt master's strange shouts and learn that, even today, their hunting cries are in Old Norman. (London's Soho, which was once a royal hunting field, is named for a Norman call that, roughly transliterated, goes "SoooooHooooo!") In those days, the hunt of choice was stag hunting. Kings and nobles chased stags; foxhunting was just something to keep the "lesser gentry" busy. But, as the ranks of the peerage grew and the towns spread and the countryside gentrified, the great stag hunts retreated to the West Country, where the land was wilder, and foxhunting became fashionable.

The oldest British foxhunt, the Bilsdale Hunt, met for the first time, in Yorkshire, around 1670, and by 1770 most of the good English packs, including the pack at Badminton, were bred to follow the scent of foxes. Ian Farquhar, an old Etonian Army captain who for nineteen years has been Master of Fox Hounds of the Beaufort Hunt, has traced the ancestry of Badminton's foxhounds back to 1743, and unearthed the records of fifty-four generations of dogs. "The foxhound is the most chronicled animal in the world," Captain Farquhar says. He himself can tell you how much money five "couple hounds," or, put simply, ten dogs, cost at the time Jane Austen is said to have finished "Pride and Prejudice"—a thousand guineas, which is to say, more than half what the Bennetts lived on for an entire year. In fact, he can tell you the whole history of the Beaufort Hunt. Most of the neighborhood can. Like it or not, they think of the hunt as their history, and it's a living history, part of the family folklore. They "remember" the Beaufort Hunt of the eighteen-sixties, when it was an open-to-all extravaganza, with thousands of riders and hunt followers. They tell stories about the eighth duke's children, who complained that they weren't permitted to foxhunt more than three times a week until they turned five; and about what the tenth duke—a legendary hunter, who was Master of the Horse to Elizabeth II—said when Queen Mary, his house guest for the whole of the Second World War, commandeered the farm and stable equipment for scrap metal; and, of course, about the comings and goings at Badminton under today's duke, a Marlborough Gallery partner whose job it has been to open Britain's plummier doors to Marlborough's raw, rich clients, and whose frequent house guest is the air hostess turned New York super-hostess Susan Gutfreund, often said to be the prototype for Maria Ruskin in "The Bonfire of the Vanities." And never mind if not everyone who hunts is a lovely person, or even a particularly democratic person. Some are cynics, or social climbers, or snobs. Some, like the Duke, support their privilege by trading in illusions of class. There is still something to be said for the argument that banning foxhunting is not going to stamp out privilege or reform the rich any more than banning yachts or family boxes at the opera.

Brian Higham, Badminton's stud groom, has run the stables of the Beaufort Hunt for nearly forty-six years—"I'm seventy-one, rising seventy-two, and I'm lucky, I go to dinner parties, I live like a millionaire"—and is acknowledged to be its sternest social critic. "Now we get a lot of 'em as got their money quick," he told me, holding forth from a folding chair in his tack room on the subject of rock stars and Internet millionaires who buy old, pedigreed, tumbledown houses in places like Gloucestershire and take up foxhunting. He does not, in general, object to the famous people who ride with the Beaufort—the philosopher Roger Scruton, say—but he minds the ones with bad manners, the ones who don't know that you stand up for a lady at a dinner table, or that you call the Master of Fox Hounds "Master," or that the thing to do, on a hunt weekend, is to stop by the tack room for a chat with Brian Higham. The Prince of Wales always stops. ("Charles gets his sloe gin from me," he likes to say.) He is sure it's the new people, with their fancy kit and bad manners and their S.U.V.s, blocking roads, and not the "gentlemen," who have given foxhunting a bad name. The gentlemen had even debated replacing their hunting coats with tweeds or plaid jackets—something that would have added a common touch to the Beaufort Hunt once the ban was tabled and the reporters began arriving. But new money wanted livery, they wanted to look like toffs. Higham said, "They were their own worst enemy."

The truth is that there are more hunts like the Ashford Valley than like the Beaufort—hunts where twenty or thirty farmers and small leaseholders and local businessmen pay five hundred pounds a season and a twenty-pound riding fee for



"Hold my video conferencing calls, Gina."

"I hate how she seems to think she's so much more depressed than everybody else."

• •

the pleasures of a day's ride with their friends. Those hunters are, in the main, plainspoken, no-frills people. They bundle up when it's cold. They ride whatever they can afford to buy. Claire Wardle, a help-desk manager who rides with both the Ashford Valley and the Pytchley, a posh Northamptonshire hunt, says that some of the Pytchley hunters still look down on her horse—"a small colored pony, brave but not even a horse"—as if it were a set of cut-rate golf clubs carried onto the Old Course at St. Andrews, although "they can't talk when I'm clearing fences ahead of them." At a farmers' hunt, no one minds. The hunt master of the Ashford Valley is a local bond salesman named Peter Claxton, who had never even ridden a horse until March last year. "The reason I'm doing this scary thing?" he said, trying to control his mare. "I don't want the government telling me what to do."

Clearly, not everyone involved with the hunt likes hunting, or even likes the hunters. It's said that as much as half the agricultural land in England is farmed by people who neither own nor control the sporting rights to that land, and Alun Michael thinks that many of them were simply too frightened to speak out before. It was a matter of social pressure. They didn't want problems with their hunting neighbors, or with the landowners from whom they leased their farms; they didn't want to be known as the people who said no when the hunt master asked for a right of way or permission to ride across (and possibly ruin) a field—especially if they availed themselves of any of the hunt's services. Hunt volunteers protect the habitat of hundreds of species. They mend fences, maintain the walls and hedges they jump, root out foxes that have gone to ground on local farms, dispose of dead farm animals, tend the covers in which foxes hide or dig their lairs, and, most important, help to manage a fox population that has multiplied so wantonly since the extinction of Britain's wolves (the fox's natural predator), in the seventeenth century, that foxes are now dug into the back yards and public parks of Central London and can be seen daily strolling around the city. On Armistice Day, in November, hundreds of people watched a fox circle the "remembrance" poppies in the gardens of Westminster Abbey while the Queen was leading a silent prayer. A month later, a *Guardian* photographer recording "a day in the life of 10 Downing Street" snapped pictures of a fox strutting past the Prime Minister's front door, right between visits from the Italian and Azerbaijani Prime Ministers and the arrival of the German Chancellor. ("Four old foxes in one day," a policeman at the corner said.)

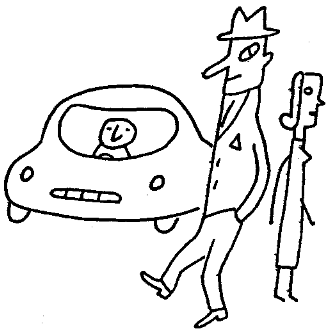
Somewhere between twenty and twenty-five thousand foxes are killed in hunts in England and Wales each year, and hunters maintain that, while this accounts for less than a quarter of the total killed—most are run over, or shot or trapped or poisoned by farmers, or savaged by farm dogs—foxhunting is by far the most rational way of culling, or, you could say, the least compromising to the "welfare of the fox." "The hound goes for the fox, it's natural," Captain Farquhar says. "But the process is selective. It follows the rules of nature. The weak fox and the sick fox get caught, but a vixen, say, either heavy or in milk, doesn't scent, and so she's safe." Most foxes get away. And most people regret it. Even the country's prodigious animal-rights lobby—which includes, among others, the R.S.P.C.A., the League Against Cruel Sports, and the Political Animal Lobby—admits that foxes can be serious pests. (It's mainly the antivivisectionists who are against killing any animal in any way for any reason.) Some lobbyists, in fact, are less concerned with promoting the rights of foxes than with exposing the hunt itself as a ritual that, to their mind, celebrates the cruelty of people—or, more accurately, celebrates the rights of privileged people to dominate their environment in a cruel way.

Jackie Ballard, the head of the R.S.P.C.A., was once a Liberal-Democrat M.P., and her constituency included Exmoor—two stag packs, seven foxhound packs. (She says that she opened her first "advice surgery," in Dulverton, with six hundred hunters and their friends demonstrating outside.) Four years ago, she lost her seat to a Tory from the Countryside Alliance, and she knows now that it's unlikely she managed to convince even a single Exmoor hunter that deliberately setting one animal on another is wrong. The R.S.P.C.A. is a hundred and eighty years old and has forty thousand active adult members—less than a third the membership of the alliance, which was scrabbled together only after Blair's election—and until the late seventies the board was reluctant to support any kind of ban, because so many of those members were farmers and landowners who, almost by definition, hunted. Now the majority of its members believe, as Ballard does, that "the suffering of an animal chased and torn apart is indisputable," whereas the suffering of an animal stalked on foot and killed with a clean shot is minimal. But the truth is that, in hunting, a clean shot to the head is as rare as a clean bite to the throat. Stag hunts end with a shot, but only because the same hounds that will happily chase a stag for hours will rarely venture anywhere in reach of its long and very sharp antlers. Foxhunts can get so close you could almost call it a contact sport. In Scotland, which permits hunting with hounds but not, as of two years ago, killing with hounds—only with the huntsman's rifle—people say it is just a matter of time before someone gets shot and dies.

There is no way around the fact that hunting of any kind is a blood sport, and that some hunts could even be called blood rituals. Some of the French boar hunts begin with an ancient sacrificial dance—a kind of pas de deux in which a virgin parries the thrusts of a hunter wielding the tusks of the last boar killed. Foxhunts in England, while arguably less sexual, used to celebrate a child's first kill with a ritual of initiation (now abandoned) called "blooding," in which the child's face was smeared with blood from the fox's tail. Ballard, like most animal-welfare activists, insists that if foxhunting weren't about blood then hunters would gladly forsake their quarry and take up drag hunting—where the huntsman rides out early, dragging a sack of fox excrement behind his horse, and in this way lays a scent for everyone else to chase. Hunters, of course, hate the idea of drag hunting. They think that to play at killing is obscene, and they have a point—though it's not one that any hunt protester is apt to credit. One of the first things that Douglas Batchelor, at the League Against Cruel Sports, said when I went to see him was "Who and what are these people who get their kicks out of killing animals? We're not talking animal rights, we're talking human wrongs." The league is to the R.S.P.C.A. what the Trotskyites are to the Labour Party, and Batchelor has no interest in discussing humane ways of culling foxes. He prefers to talk about the league's "moral and political interest in social progress." And, for his purposes, progress means that "at certain times a democracy restrains the behavior of its people." (He doesn't think that there's any such thing as barnyard pests, only "bad shepherds.") He refers to foxhunting as "willy waving," and compares it to the ritual abuse of younger boys by sixth formers at an English boarding school, saying that sixth formers and hunters are simply the same bullies, at different ages. In the end, it is an angry class argument. A lot of the arguments you hear in Britain still are.

Carlyn and Colin Chisholm, my friends and hosts at the Beaufort, are a hunting family. Carlyn hunts. Their three children hunt. Colin, who works all week in London as an investment manager, *could* hunt, but he prefers to spend his Saturdays in the library of their Gloucestershire house, reading the paper, having a drink with a friend, watching a horse race or two on television, placing a few bad bets, taking a nap, listening to Haydn—all of which he does the weekend of the opening meet. They have a full house. Their sons, Hugh and Mark. Hugh's girlfriend, Daisy. A couple of Colin's old Eton and Oxford friends. One friend's wife. The family's three dogs. Two visiting whippets. Four horses, if you count the stable. There are big hunt breakfasts of fresh juice, kedgeree, henhouse eggs, bacon, scones, and plenty of hot coffee; big hunt dinners with gigot from the Welsh mountain lambs that the Chisholms raise on their thirty acres, and plenty of good wine and champagne. Everyone is amusing. Everyone is attentive. The house is big, old, and comfortable, and it absorbs us all.

By some reckonings, my friends are toffs. Colin comes from an old London newspaper family; his grandfather was the city editor of the *Times;* his father edited the *Financial Times;* his sister, Anne, who introduced us, is a well-known writer. Carlyn comes from an old Sussex family with an estate called Petworth. Her father was Lord Egremont; her brother Max, who inherited the title, is the biographer of Arthur Balfour and Siegfried Sassoon. They have the class markers—Carlyn's governess, Colin's Eton, the fact that they read the *Telegraph* and listen to the Queen's Christmas message and, of course, wear Beaufort livery—but the truth is that privilege is just something they have, and they wear it lightly. They are friendly, intelligent people who worry at least as much about the state of the world as they do about the weather at the next meet. None of them lust for the sight of blood, or ride all day for the moment when the lead hound leaps for the fox's throat. But they love the riding, and the exhilaration of the chase. They are not ravaging an endangered species, and it's hard to imagine that their gallops through Gloucestershire are undermining the public good. (For the record, I hunt. I shot guinea fowl and spur-winged geese in the Botswana bush, and ate them. Once, I stalked an impala to eat, and missed. I have never ridden to hounds, but I would if I rode better.)



One night in London, I was having dinner with the economist Richard Portes, and he made what I thought was an interesting argument for banning foxhunting. "There's an existing obsession with class," he said. "And hunting is a symbol of class. They've been trying to get rid of those symbols. There aren't many of them left, and it seems to me perfectly reasonable to get rid of this one. The perception will be that they have accomplished something." Well, maybe. Sometimes perceptions are beside the point, or wrong. The toffiest toffs may be comical in their posturing, they may seem to have stepped out of a chapter of Trollope or Fielding. But they do not rule England anymore; power has shifted, moral authority has shifted. They own a lot of land—maybe too much land—but today they are marginal. England is doing quite nicely without them. If it weren't, hunters might not be clinging to their hunt communities the way the coal miners, twenty years ago, clung to their pit villages. And the backbenchers would not be as punishing now as Mrs. Thatcher was then. Perhaps they all would do better, from the point of view of progress, to give more weight to reality than to perceptions of reality. The only perception of reality I would swear by, after a month in England, belonged to the fox at Badminton that got away. ♦

FICTION

ICE

BY THOMAS McGUANE

The drum major lived a short distance from my house and could sometimes be seen sitting pensively on his porch wearing his shako—a tall truncated cone of white simulated fur, with a strap that cut across his chin—while folding the *Free Press* for his paper route. I was reluctant even to wave to him, since this was a time in my life when my greatest worry—originating I have no idea where—was that I was a hopeless coward. Although we saw each other nearly every day at school, the greetings I had offered the drum major in the past had fallen on deaf ears, and I had long since given up on the idea of getting any sort of response from him at all. I did the route for the *News*, a competitor of the *Free Press*, so it wasn't surprising that the drum major and I didn't speak. But after he scored 156 on a school-administered I.Q. test, and then, one September day, single-handedly captured an AWOL sailor by boldly shouting, "Halt!," and escorting him to the brig at the nearby base, I began to study him in a fixed and admiring way. I imagined that he might somehow hold the key to escaping my cowardice.

I delivered papers in the evening from my bicycle, and as the year grew late I was often overtaken by my fear of the dark. I had a recurrent fantasy of a muscular ostrich pursuing me in the night and pecking through my skull into my brain—a terror that stemmed from my first and only trip to the zoo. Whenever I contemplated my fears, that ostrich figured in my reflections as a kind of emblem of my spinelessness.

I always delivered my papers as promptly as possible; the drum major delivered his whenever he felt inclined to do so. One afternoon in early October, he unexpectedly chose to address me; he accused me of trying to make him look bad by getting my papers onto people's porches and lawns before his. When I tried to respond, he cut me off and directed me to wait until his papers had been delivered before delivering mine. I complied with his instructions, tossing my papers onto lawns at all hours and dodging any customers who tried to complain.

At school, I watched to see whether the drum major had the same effect on others as he did on me, but he was always alone. I went out of my way to watch him practice on our school's big, wind- and sometimes snow-blown football field, where he would strut toward the goalpost trailing a stingy cape and twirling his baton, his white shako tilted back rakishly, until the time came for the blissful high toss and recapture of the spinning chrome-plated baton, preferably without getting beaned in the head by one of its white rubber tips. At game time, when he led our cacophonous marching band in its disordered frenzy, the entire drama hung on his ability to catch that baton—what should have been one small gesture became the centerpiece of an otherwise lurching rigmarole. There was something about the drum major's haughty gait and his seeming disconnection from the confused uproar of the band behind him that mesmerized me, although the band, with its modest and unattractive demeanor—the players wore threadbare maroon uniforms with gold piping and were led by a hugely overweight youngster who did a Grambling-style shimmy while flogging his glockenspiel with felt hammers—was more attractive to the rest of the crowd, some members of which threw horse chestnuts at the drum major, whom they regarded as stuck-up.

Drum majors back then were on the verge of being replaced by "majorettes," and a position that had once been considered honorably athletic had become somehow effete and clouded with unspoken sexual ambiguity—although that ambiguity hadn't yet managed to taint our own drum major, whose pert and blossoming girlfriends all seemed to wind up losing their reputations. Nevertheless, the crowd hoped for humiliating disaster. I, strangely, hoped for his success. I waited for that high toss to produce, as if by the hand of Praxiteles, the most graceful division of space, a split second of immortality for the drum major, and, for me, a lesson in courage. At the same time, another part of me shared the crowd's wish to see him on all fours with the baton up his behind. As would become a lifelong habit for most of us, we longed to witness both spectacular achievement and mortifying failure. Neither of these things, we were discreetly certain, would ever come to us; we would instead be granted the frictionless lives of the meek.

Our school played Flat Rock on the last Saturday of October and winter was already in the air, the trees shabby with half-shed leaves. I was shivering in the crowd on the rickety, exposed bleachers, watching our band wheel onto the field. When the drum major at last tossed the baton, it fell so far behind him that he had to dash into the band to retrieve it. Too late, he was swept aside, forced to stand, hands on hips, until the musicians had passed, revealing his baton on the ground, twisted like a pretzel. As he crouched to pick it up, the baying crowd was beside itself. With a sense of fearful liberation, I joined it, my community. In that uproar, I was briefly free of fear. I thrilled to the courage of the mob. Still, it wasn't quite the courage I was looking for.

The following week, the drum major seemed even more isolated at school, though, as always, he appeared content with his solitude. Mrs. Andrews, the beautiful young wife of our thuggish football coach, who had renounced her own remarkable athletic skills to teach us history, made a special effort to console him; I remember how gently she bent beside his desk to correct his work while, across the aisle, Stanley Peabody, with his flattop haircut, pegged charcoal pants, and Flagg Flyer blue suède shoes, attempted to look down her blouse. Mrs. Andrews, with her shining auburn hair and her single strand of imitation pearls, was accustomed to being ogled, and Stanley was little more to her than a name on the roster taped to her desk.

Her attention to the drum major was all the more surprising for the fact that she had hardly looked at him in weeks. I was a great observer of any and all interactions between the drum major and Mrs. Andrews. At that point in my life, virtually everything around me seemed scarlet with erotic undertones, and for months now I had suspected that a relationship existed between our history teacher and the drum major—a quiet and subtle relationship, which had nothing to do with the smirking of the other boys in the class. Their behavior, I knew instinctively, amounted to nothing more than an adolescent salute to Mrs. Andrews's lovely figure. The drum major, on the other hand, gazed at Mrs. Andrews with a sort of calm arrogance that seemed to intimate possession, and which only grew stronger as rumors spread through the class. Mrs. Andrews, meanwhile, had become increasingly

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timid with the drum major, rarely addressing him directly, and it was with a kind of flourish that she finally called on him in class one morning.

"What," she asked, casting her eyes over the top of his curly brown hair—the tension in the classroom had reached the point where she could no longer look straight at him—"was the principal result of the Crédit Mobilier scandal?" Stanley Peabody leered broadly at this resumption of contact. His sidekick, Boley Cardwell, a prematurely wizened teen with lank blond hair cascading over his forehead, grabbed his crotch surreptitiously and rolled his eyes in feigned ecstasy.

Legs stretched in the aisle and crossed at the ankles, fingers laced behind his head, the drum major said, "You tell me." He had the affectless James Dean look down pat.

An electric silence filled the room: this was clearly a bit of amorous badinage disguised as classwork. Mrs. Andrews's face colored. The drum major seemed to have her just where he wanted her.

"Perhaps," she said, "you feel I have asked you the wrong question."

"Could be."

"In that case, why don't you pose a question for the class, based on this week's reading?"

The drum major leaned forward, dropped his elbows to his knees, drew his feet back under his chair, and held his head for a moment before looking up. He said, "Who is buried in Grant's tomb?"

By the end of the day, he was the most important boy in school; people lingered to watch him pass in the hallway and gave him plenty of space at his locker.

Mrs. Andrews added girls' physical education to her teaching load, and from then on she seemed always to have a whistle around her neck. She moved with a new formality, even when teaching history. While Stanley Peabody and Boley Cardwell headed a small group that gathered in the bleachers to watch the girls run wind sprints, the drum major sat apart, focussing on Mrs. Andrews. On coed gym days, her husband, Bud Andrews, was also on the field, coaching the boys, a classic phys.-ed. instructor in sweats and a severe crewcut that bared his scalp on top. One cold, dark afternoon when the windows of the gym were silver with reflected light and the air was sour with sweat, Coach Andrews suddenly sprang into the bleachers, lifted the drum major into the air, and shook him like a rag doll. The drum major managed to retain his smile even as his head was flung about.

Coach Andrews was suspended from his job and would never have been reinstated if it weren't for the generally held view, among the faculty, that there was something fishy about the drum major. To avoid further misunderstanding, a tutor was hired to help him complete his history requirement, though everyone agreed that Mrs. Andrews could hardly be held responsible for her husband's freak-out.

I spent my paper-route earnings on small things—an imitation Civil War-era forage cap, a British commando knife, steel taps for my shoes, muskrat traps. I briefly fell prey to a magazine-coupon swindle whereby I tried to win the baby monkey whose huge eyes dominated the advertisement. But, as I fell behind in my payments and began to doubt whether the monkey would ever be shipped, I switched programs and wound up with a much cheaper flying squirrel, which bit me savagely and flew around our basement for two days before escaping through the window. My father said, "Next time you've got ten bucks to spare, don't throw it away on a squirrel." My luck changed when, while digging up a jack-in-the-pulpit as a gift for my mother, I discovered an old brass compass, which I imagined had once belonged to the *voyageurs*, Jesuits, Recollets, and their various bands of Potawatomi, Wyandots, and Hurons. That compass was always in my pocket, a talisman, the one thing that stood between me and the dreaded unknown.

By this time, I had recognized that fear was the defining feature of my life. My mistake lay in believing that I was unique in this. Still, I had gone back to delivering my papers on time; I had envisioned this as a test of my mettle, but the drum major seemed to have forgotten all about me. He said

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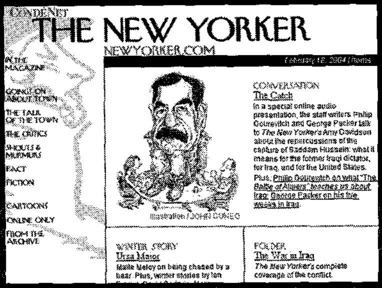
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In this week's issue, Rebecca Mead writes about the arrival of quality cuisine in Britain. In this Q. & A., she discusses the strange

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The Bush Administration grapples with stem-cell research.
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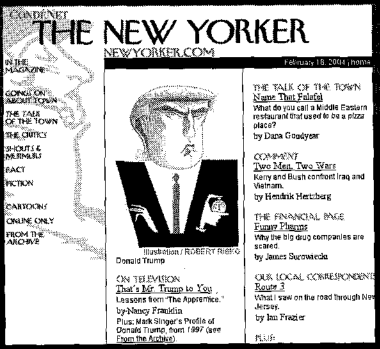
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What do you call a Middle Eastern restaurant that used to be a pizza place?
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nothing. I dreamed of becoming a warrior or a big-game hunter. If I was going to prove myself, I would need a real trial.

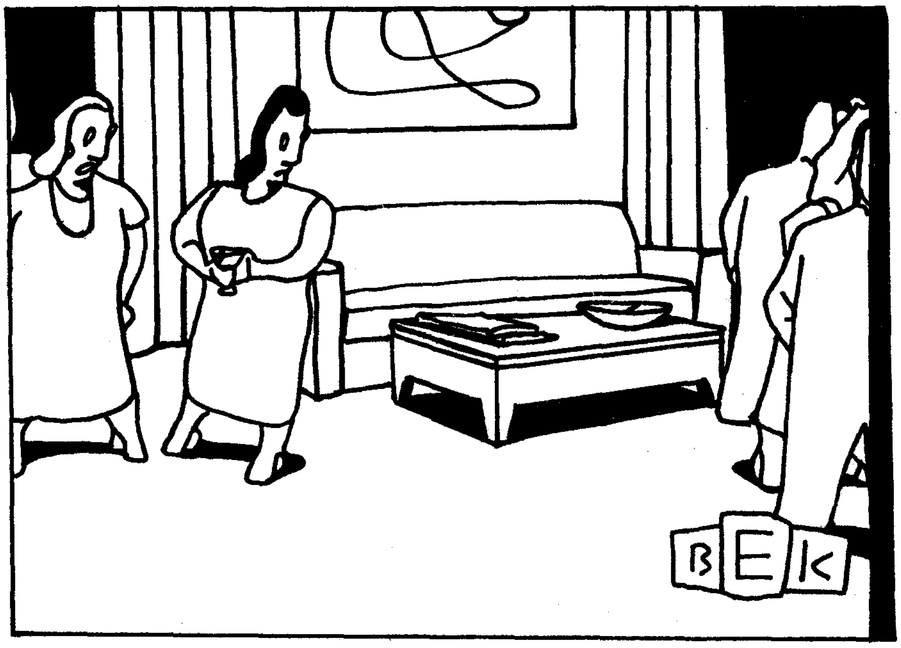
In January, Lake Erie froze nearly to Canada. One evening, standing before its ominous expanse in my ice skates, with a wool cap pulled over my ears and a long scarf wound around my neck and crisscrossed over my chest beneath my blue Navy-surplus pea jacket, I left the shore. I planned to face down the spectre of my fear by going as far as I dared toward Canada, or the Livingston ship channel if the icebreaker had been through. I hoped that my love of skating would propel me through the worst of my worries.

I struggled over the corrugations of the shore ice, and then ventured onto smoother, glassier terrain that rewarded me with long glides. I could see bubbles below me, and the white bellies of upended perch and rock bass. I began to dream of landing in Canada, on that foreign shore from whence, according to Mrs. Andrews, the redcoats had once launched sorties against our Colonial heroes. I began to imagine a visit to the old British fort at Amherstburg. I would skate home with tales of imperial ghosts and whatever other secret existences I might discover in those places where only the most courageous ventured. I would tell Mrs. Andrews what I had done. These dreams enlivened my skating, and I raced on, stroke after stroke. One day, years afterward, I would come to view this night as the template for the many disasters I later created for myself, but, at the time, risking my life in the gathering darkness on a day when I had cowered at the thought of a paper cut or an infected pimple produced no awareness of contradiction. I felt only the allure of the hard, perfect ice, cold-snap ice unblemished by wind during its formation. It was impossible for me to imagine the drum major out here in his shako like an animated Q-tip—there would be no prancing among the crows and ice-killed fish for him, I gloated.

I kept going. If I turned back, I told myself, if I let the falling dark turn me back, I would never be any good and the fog of cowardice would envelop me forever.

The ice seemed to rise before me and disappear into the twilit sky, as though they were one and the same. The lights that had shone briefly on the shore were gone now, and I had yet to see my first Canadian light or the outlines of the fort. I reached for the old compass in my pocket.

When I stopped to reconnoitre, I felt the cold penetrate and I adjusted my scarf. It was time to go home, and I knew it, but I couldn't leave at the first wave of panic. I would press on into the blackness just long enough to prove that it



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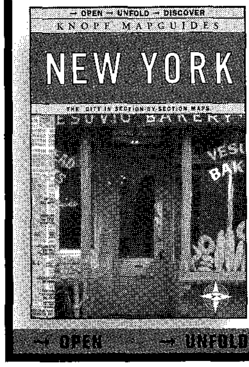

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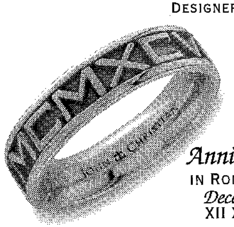

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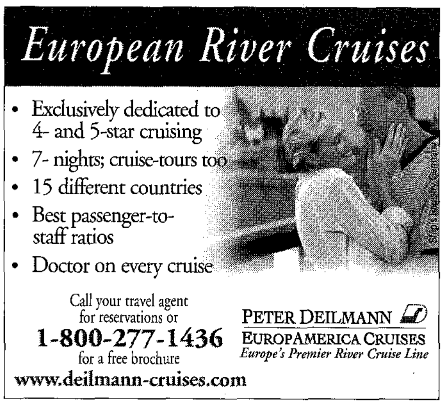
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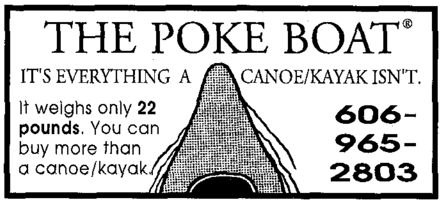
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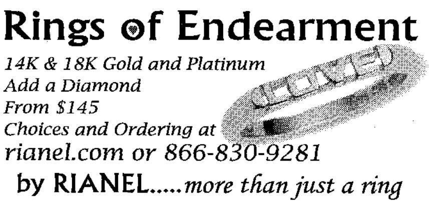
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E.D. IN COMA

In her mind, in bare feet
she is walking among

April's first
cold
pubic violets, still

here, heaven-haunted
her eyes

and lips
closed:
Soon

so soon I'll be a part
of all that I
now merely
see

—*Franz Wright*

was I who had elected to return and not those forces which were always rendering me worthless in my own eyes. Such thoughts produced an oddly inflexible gait in my skating; I reached my feet stiffly through a space that I couldn't confirm with my eyes. Suddenly, the sound of my blades, which had seemed to fill the air around me, was replaced by another, more murmurous tone, like a church congregation heard from afar. I was gliding toward the sound when a vast aggravation of noise and physical turbulence erupted and a storm of ducks took flight in front of me: it was water. The lake heaved a gloomy sigh, and I found myself, after some minutes of agitated effort, almost at the edge of the ice. I skated off in a panic, and when I was once more standing squarely on black ice I stopped and recognized that I was lost. A step in any direction and I could drown in freezing water. I was becoming claustrophobic, too—I had an incongruous sense of airlessness, as though I'd been locked in a windowless room. I knew that I was going to die.

I lashed out first at my own entangling fantasies—the hated redcoats, the pursuing ostrich—and then at death itself. My bowels began to churn, and I squatted on the ice with the pea jacket over my head, my pants around my knees. I recited the Lord's Prayer in a quavering voice. I was answered: a deep, rhythmic throb gathered slowly into a rumble. A light emerged from the blackness in front of me, followed by several others, until they formed a line streaming toward me like comets. Then, just as the sound was at its most intense, an enormous black shape rose before me, causing the ice to groan. It was not the god I had expected. The lights streamed away and all was silent again. A freighter bound for Lake Superior.

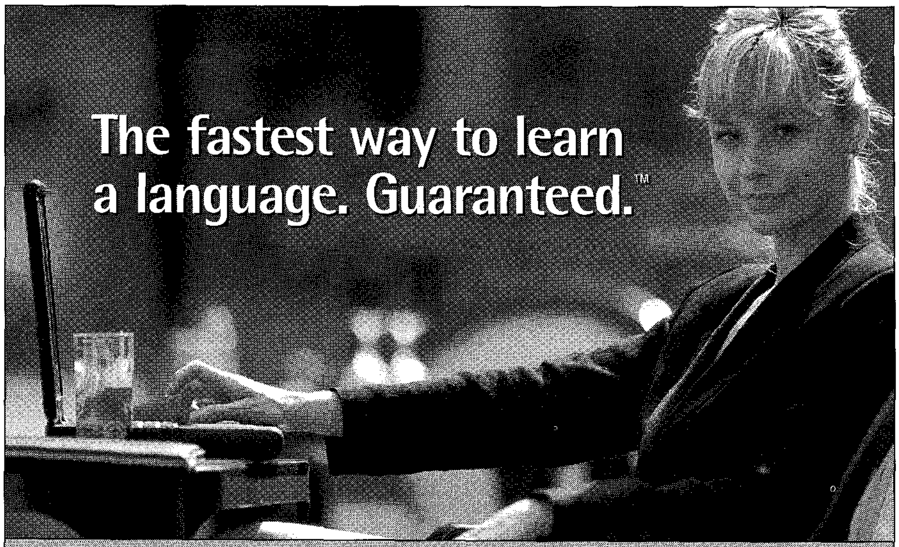
I extracted the compass from my pocket and began to bargain with death. It took some concentration to rotate the battered brass case until I had north pinned down; then, staring at the cloudy glass held almost under my nose, I began to skate as rapidly as I could, placing all my faith in the ornate "W." I moved fast on the cold mirror beneath me, creating my own wind, knowing that if the compass was faulty after all its years in the ground I would skate straight off the ice into a world from which I would not return. But a kind of faith conveyed from the freighter god to the compass kept me peering into my cupped hands as I pressed on with all I had. In a short time I could make out some shapes in my path, fishermen's shanties—a series of small houses positioned over round holes spudded through the ice, through which the occupants could angle for perch or hang for hours, iron spear in hand, to await the great pike, drawn to them by a hand-whittled wooden perch decoy. By night, these shacks were all deserted.

But one shanty revealed a flickering light, and to it I attached all my hopes. At its door, I made out voices, and I stopped before knocking. They were voices from my classroom, and I listened, as if dreaming, to what sounded like a quarrel. First, the drum major, his voice cocky, bantering. The other seemed to plead and whimper, and was, of course, Mrs. Andrews. And then there were different sounds, less precise than words. I skated off as silently as I could, afraid that if they caught me they would have to do something terrible to me, whether they wanted to or not. I had no business knowing what I knew.

I hit land a long way from where I'd put on my skates, and I was obliged to traverse a considerable distance tottering on my blades across pickerelweed and pebbles, waving my arms for balance, while thanking everything around me for the continuation of my days on earth. But, in a scrap of tangled beech woods, my pious thoughts soon crumbled beneath a lurid, new vision, something as dark as the woods around me. It was as if, as I conquered one fear, another had risen to take its place—even more daunting than the last.

Light from the small houses that lined the narrow road to the shore made wild shadows in the leafless trees. I heard dogs barking behind closed doors, and one homeowner let his beagle out while watching me from his doorway. I tried to manage my movements, but there was no way to walk normally, nor any way for an observer to see that I was wearing skates. The beagle approached to within ten feet of me and sat down, emitting a single reflective bark as I passed its lawn. The owner remained in the doorway and watched me pass in silence. I gave him a little wave, which he didn't return.

I didn't go on the ice again that winter. It seemed that there were better things to do. As the days grew longer, I often saw the drum major, starting his paper route as I got home from mine. We didn't speak, but my customers got the *News* on time. ♦



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THE CRITICS

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE

The strange science of Francis Galton.

BY JIM HOLT

In the eighteen-eighties, residents of cities across Britain might have noticed an aged, bald, bewhiskered gentleman sedulously eying every girl he passed on the street while manipulating something in his pocket. What they were seeing was not lechery in action but science. Concealed in the man's pocket was a device he called a "pricker," which consisted of a needle mounted on a thimble and a cross-shaped piece of paper. By pricking holes in different parts of the paper, he could surreptitiously record his rating of a female passerby's appearance, on a scale ranging from attractive to repellent. After many months of wielding his pricker and tallying the results, he drew a "beauty map" of the British Isles. London proved the epicenter of beauty, Aberdeen of its opposite.

Such research was entirely congenial to Francis Galton, a man who took as his motto "Whenever you can, count." Galton was one of the great Victorian innovators. He explored unknown regions of Africa. He pioneered the fields of weather forecasting and fingerprinting. He discovered statistical rules that revolutionized the methodology of science. Yet today he is most often remembered for an achievement that puts him in a decidedly sinister light: he was the father of eugenics, the science, or pseudoscience, of "improving" the human race by selective breeding.

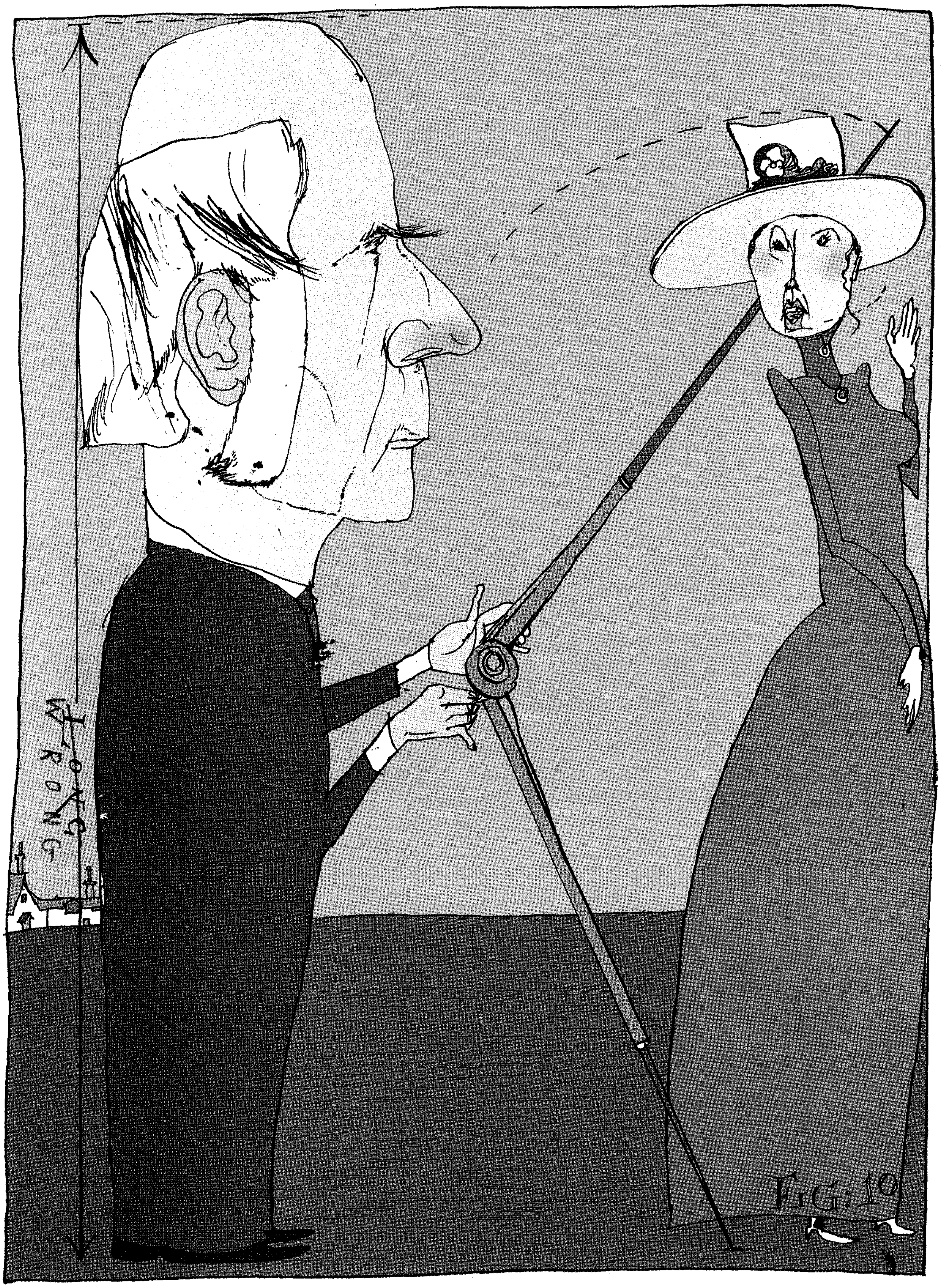
A new biography, "Extreme Measures: The Dark Visions and Bright Ideas of Francis Galton" (Bloomsbury; $24.95), casts the man's sinister aspect right in the title. The author, Martin Brookes, is a former evolutionary biologist who worked at University College London's Galton Laboratory (which, before a sanitizing name change in 1965, was the Galton Laboratory of National Eugenics). Brookes is clearly impressed by the exuberance of Galton's curiosity and the range of his achievement. Still, he cannot help finding Galton a little dotty, a man gripped by an obsession with counting and measuring that made him "one of the Victorian era's chief exponents of the scientific folly." If Brookes is right, Galton was led astray not merely by Victorian prejudice but by a failure to understand the very statistical ideas that he had conceived.

Born in 1822 into a wealthy and distinguished Quaker family—his maternal grandfather was Erasmus Darwin, a revered physician and botanist who wrote poetry about the sex lives of plants—Galton enjoyed a pampered upbringing. As a child, he revelled in his own precocity: "I am four years old and can read any English book. I can say all the Latin Substantives and Adjectives and active verbs besides 52 lines of Latin poetry. I can cast up any sum in addition and multiply by 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10. I can also say the pence table. I read French a little and I know the Clock." When Galton was sixteen, his father decided that he should pursue a medical career, as his grandfather had. He was sent to train in a hospital, but was put off by the screams of unanesthetized patients on the operating table. Seeking guidance from his cousin Charles Darwin, who had just returned from his voyage on the H.M.S. Beagle, Galton was advised to "read Mathematics like a house on fire." So he enrolled at Cambridge, where, despite his invention of a "gumption-reviver machine" that dripped water on his head, he promptly suffered a breakdown from overwork.

This pattern of frantic intellectual activity followed by nervous collapse continued throughout Galton's life. His need to earn a living, though, ended when he was twenty-two, with the death of his father. Now in possession of a handsome inheritance, he took up a life of sporting hedonism. In 1845, he went on a hippo-shooting expedition down the Nile, then trekked by camel across the Nubian Desert. He taught himself Arabic and apparently caught a venereal disease from a prostitute—which, his biographer speculates, may account for a noticeable cooling in the young man's ardor for women.

The world still contained vast uncharted areas, and exploring them seemed an apt vocation to this rich Victorian bachelor. In 1850, Galton sailed to southern Africa and ventured into parts of the interior never before seen by a white man. Before setting out, he purchased a theatrical crown in Drury Lane which he planned to place "on the head of the greatest or most distant potentate I should meet with." The story of his thousand-mile journey through the bush is grippingly told in this biography. Improvising survival tactics as he went along, he contended with searing heat, scarce water, tribal warfare, marauding lions, shattered axles, dodgy guides, and native helpers whose conflicting dietary superstitions made it impossible to settle on a commonly agreeable meal from the caravan's mobile larder of sheep and oxen. He became adept in the use of the sextant, at one point using it to measure from afar the curves of an especially buxom native woman—"Venus among Hottentots." The climax of the journey was his encounter with King Nangoro, a tribal ruler locally reputed to be "the fattest man in the world." Nangoro was fascinated by the Englishman's white skin and straight hair, and moderately pleased when the tacky stage crown was placed on his head. But when the King dispatched his niece, smeared in butter and red ochre, to his guest's tent to serve as a wife for the night, Galton, wearing his one clean suit of

DAVID HUGHES


LONG
WRONG
FIG: 10

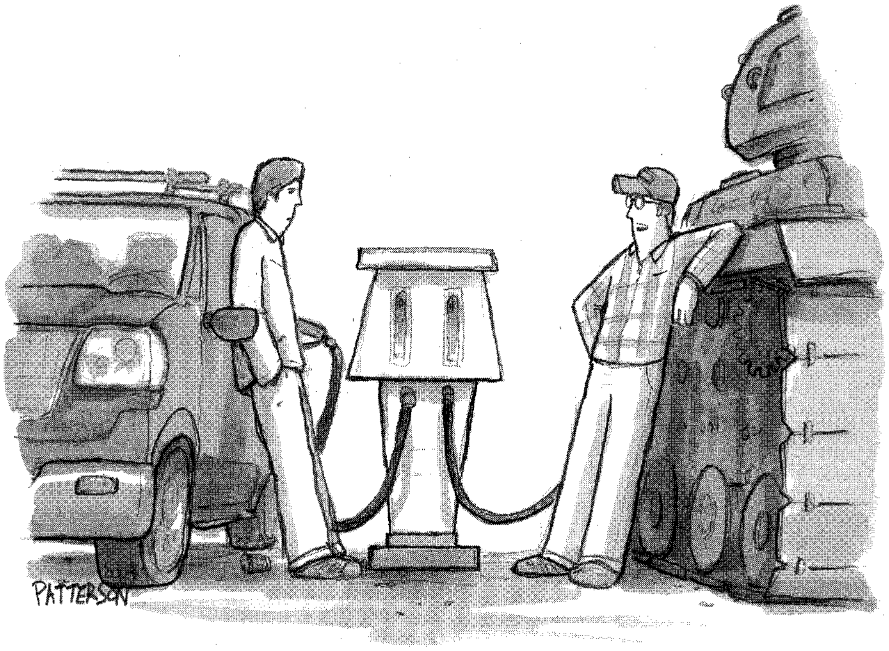
Galton's fascination with counting and measuring led him to revolutionize statistics, but his eugenic theories had a darker legacy.

white linen, found the naked princess "as capable of leaving a mark on anything she touched as a well-inked printer's roller . . . so I had her ejected with scant ceremony."

Galton's feats made him famous: on his return to England, the thirty-year-old explorer was celebrated in the newspapers and awarded a gold medal by the Royal Geographical Society. After writing a best-selling book on how to survive in the African bush, he decided that he had had enough of the adventurer's life. He married a rather plain woman from an intellectually illustrious family, with whom he never succeeded in having children, and settled down in South Kensington to a life of scientific dilettantism. His true métier, he had always felt, was measurement. In pursuit of it, he conducted elaborate experiments in the science of tea-making, deriving equations for brewing the perfect cup. Eventually, his interest hit on something that was actually important: the weather. Meteorology could barely be called a science in those days; the forecasting efforts of the British government's first chief weatherman met with such ridicule that he ended up slitting his throat. Taking the initiative, Galton solicited reports of conditions all over Europe and then created the prototype of the modern weather map. He also discovered a weather pattern that he called the "anti-cyclone"—better known today as the high-pressure system.

Galton might have puttered along for the rest of his life as a minor gentleman scientist had it not been for a dramatic event: the publication of Darwin's "On the Origin of Species," in 1859. Reading his cousin's book, Galton was filled with a sense of clarity and purpose. One thing in it struck him with special force: to illustrate how natural selection shaped species, Darwin cited the breeding of domesticated plants and animals by farmers to produce better strains. Perhaps, Galton concluded, human evolution could be guided in the same way. But where Darwin had thought mainly about the evolution of physical features, like wings and eyes, Galton applied the same hereditary logic to mental attributes, like talent and virtue. "If a twentieth part of the cost and pains were spent in measures for the improvement of the human race that is spent on the improvements of the breed of horses and cattle, what a galaxy of genius might we not create!" he wrote in an 1864 magazine article, his opening eugenics salvo. It was two decades later that he coined the word "eugenics," from the Greek for "wellborn."

Galton also originated the phrase "nature versus nurture," which still reverberates in debates today. (It was probably suggested by Shakespeare's "The Tempest," in which Prospero laments that his slave Caliban is "A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick.") At Cambridge, Galton had noticed that the top students had relatives who had also excelled there; surely, he reasoned, such family success was not a matter of chance. His hunch was strengthened during his travels, which gave him a vivid sense of what he called "the mental peculiarities of different races." Galton made an honest effort to justify his belief in nature over nurture with hard evidence. In his 1869 book "Hereditary Genius," he assembled long lists of "eminent" men—judges, poets, scientists, even oarsmen and wrestlers—to show that excellence ran in families. To counter the objection that social advantages rather than biology might be behind this, he used the adopted sons of Popes as a kind of control group. His case elicited skeptical reviews, but it impressed Darwin. "You have made a convert of an opponent in one sense," he wrote to Galton, "for I have always maintained that, excepting fools, men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work." Yet Galton's labors had hardly begun. If his eugenic utopia was to be a practical possibility, he needed to know more about how heredity worked. His belief in eugenics thus led him to try to discover the laws of inheritance. And that, in turn, led him to statistics.



"I just feel safer in one of these."

Statistics at that time was a dreary welter of population numbers, trade figures, and the like. It was devoid of mathematical interest, save for a single concept: the bell curve. The bell curve was first observed when eighteenth-century astronomers noticed that the errors in their measurements of the positions of planets and other heavenly bodies tended to cluster symmetrically around the true value. A graph of the errors had the shape of a bell. In the early nineteenth century, a Belgian astronomer named Adolph Quetelet observed that this "law of error" also applied to many human phenomena. Gathering information on the chest sizes of more than five thousand Scottish soldiers, for example, Quetelet found that the data traced a bell-shaped curve centered on the average chest size, about forty inches.

As a matter of mathematics, the bell curve is guaranteed to arise whenever some variable (like human height) is determined by lots of little causes (like genes, health, and diet) operating more or less independently. For Quetelet, the bell curve represented accidental deviations from an ideal he called *l'homme moyen*—the average man. When Galton stumbled upon Quetelet's work, how-

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ever, he exultantly saw the bell curve in a new light: what it described was not accidents to be overlooked but differences that revealed the variability on which evolution depended. His quest for the laws that governed how these differences were transmitted from one generation to the next led to what Brookes justly calls "two of Galton's greatest gifts to science": regression and correlation.

Although Galton was more interested in the inheritance of mental abilities, he knew that they would be hard to measure. So he focussed on physical traits, like height. The only rule of heredity known at the time was the vague "Like begets like." Tall parents tend to have tall children, while short parents tend to have short children. But individual cases were unpredictable. Hoping to find some larger pattern, in 1884 Galton set up an "anthropometric laboratory" in London. Drawn by his fame, thousands of people streamed in and submitted to measurement of their height, weight, reaction time, pulling strength, color perception, and so on. Among the visitors was William Gladstone, the Prime Minister. "Mr. Gladstone was amusingly insistent about the size of his head . . . but after all it was not so very large in circumference," noted Galton, who took pride in his own massive bald dome.

After obtaining height data from two hundred and five pairs of parents and nine hundred and twenty-eight of their adult children, Galton plotted the points on a graph, with the parents' heights represented on one axis and the children's on the other. He then pencilled a straight line though the cloud of points to capture the trend it represented. The slope of this line turned out to be two-thirds. What this meant was that exceptionally tall (or short) parents had children who, on average, were only two-thirds as exceptional as they were. In other words, when it came to height children tended to be less exceptional than their parents. The same, he had noticed years earlier, seemed to be true in the case of "eminence": the children of J. S. Bach, for example, may have been more musically distinguished than average, but they were less distinguished than their father. Galton called this phenomenon "regression toward mediocrity." Regression analysis furnished a way of predicting one thing (a child's height) from another (its parents')

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Ha Ha, *by Dave King (Little, Brown; $23.95).* King's first novel is told from the point of view of Howie Kapostash, a Vietnam vet who was left unable to speak or write as the result of an explosion. He mows the lawn at the local convent, and shares his ramshackle childhood home with lodgers. King has a gift for the kind of easy dialogue that feels like a game of catch, the very thing Howie can't participate in, and his details ring true—the sad house, the starchy nuns, Howie's smug sense of his wasted life. But it's a setup waiting for pathos, and when Howie's coke-addicted high-school girlfriend saddles him with her nine-year-old son the plot moves predictably (damaged vet cheering at school pageant; vet buying catcher's mitt) toward movie-ready redemption.

Bury the Chains, *by Adam Hochschild (Houghton Mifflin; $26.95).* Hochschild's history of British abolitionism notes that ending slavery would have seemed as unlikely in eighteenth-century England as banning automobiles does today. Despite the "latent feeling" among intellectuals that slavery was barbarous, Caribbean sugar plantations were seen as a necessary part of the economy. Prefiguring many social movements to come, the anti-slavery crusade was driven by the partnership between a committed activist, Thomas Clarkson, and a connected politician, William Wilberforce. It was Clarkson and his Quaker associates who pioneered the use of petitions, eyewitness accounts, and even an early, innocent form of direct-mail solicitation. Hochschild argues that the violent techniques of naval press gangs primed England's populace to consider the plight of the slaves. His capacious narrative is both disturbing and fascinating, and not without its ironies: when Parliament finally did abolish slavery, in 1833, plantation owners were generously compensated for their loss of "property."

Shakespeare After All, *by Marjorie Garber (Pantheon; $40).* In recent years, Garber, a professor at Harvard, has attracted notice with offbeat work about such subjects as dogs and cross-dressing, but this book—a collection of her lectures on each of Shakespeare's plays—marks a return to the core curriculum. Garber is appealingly undogmatic, deploying insights from textual scholarship, post-colonial theory, and Elizabethan stage history, without being beholden to any single approach. Although she has no blockbuster Bard thesis to prove, her introduction is an exemplary account of what is known about Shakespeare and how his work has been read and regarded through the centuries, while the individual essays display scrupulous and subtle close reading. It is well known that Romeo and Juliet's first lines to each other form a sonnet, but Garber adds that it reverses the Petrarchan tradition of unrequited love: it is "a sonnet that *works*. It results in a kiss."

Epileptic, *by David B. (Pantheon; $25).* The French cartoonist Pierre-François Beauchard (he changed his name to David B. as a teen-ager) had an unremarkable childhood in nineteen-sixties France, until his older brother, Jean-Christophe, began to have epileptic seizures. This graphic memoir depicts, with an admirable lack of sentimentality, how dealing with illness can become a power struggle as desperate and corrupting as that of war. The family's youngest child, Florence, attempts suicide; Pierre-François fantasizes about killing his brother; and Jean-Christophe's rages become increasingly unmanageable and violent. The Beauchards' futile quest for a cure takes them from surgeons to macrobiotic diets to spiritual mediums. David B. draws these potential solutions as totemic symbols, and, in one haunting panel, his mother is surrounded by their jeering, insistent forms. "So long as my mother hasn't tried every single one she'll be tormented by guilt," he writes.

when the two things were fuzzily related. Galton went on to develop a measure of the *strength* of such fuzzy relationships, one that could be applied even when the things related were different in kind—like rainfall and crop yield. He called this more general technique "correlation."

The result was a major conceptual breakthrough. Until then, science had pretty much been limited to deterministic laws of cause and effect—which are hard to find in the biological world, where multiple causes often blend together in a messy way. Thanks to Galton, statistical laws gained respectability in science. His discovery of regression toward mediocrity—or regression to the mean, as it is now called—has resonated even more widely. Yet, as straightforward as it seems, the idea has been a snare even for the sophisticated. The common misconception is that it implies convergence over time. If very tall parents tend to have somewhat shorter children, and very short parents tend to have somewhat taller children, doesn't that mean that eventually everyone should be the same height? No, because regression works backward as well as forward in time: very tall children tend to have somewhat shorter parents, and very short children tend to have somewhat taller parents. The key to understanding this seeming paradox is that regression to the mean arises when enduring factors (which might be called "skill") mix causally with transient factors (which might be called "luck"). Take the case of sports, where regression to the mean is often mistaken for choking or slumping. Major-league baseball players who managed to bat better than .300 last season did so through a combination of skill and luck. Some of them are truly great players who had a so-so year, but the majority are merely good players who had a lucky year. There is no reason that the latter group should be equally lucky this year; that is why around eighty per cent of them will see their batting average decline.

To mistake regression for a real force that causes talent or quality to dissipate over time, as so many have, is to commit what has been called "Galton's fallacy." In 1933, a Northwestern University professor named Horace Secrist produced a book-length example of the fallacy in "The Triumph of Mediocrity in Business," in which he argued that, since highly profitable firms tend to become less profitable, and highly unprofitable ones tend to become less unprofitable, all firms will soon be mediocre. A few decades ago, the Israeli Air Force came to the conclusion that blame must be more effective than praise in motivating pilots, since poorly performing pilots who were criticized subsequently made better landings, whereas high performers who were praised made worse ones. (It is a sobering thought that we might generally tend to overrate censure and underrate praise because of the regression fallacy.) More recently, an editorialist for the *Times* erroneously argued that the regression effect alone would insure that racial differences in I.Q. would disappear over time.

Did Galton himself commit Galton's fallacy? Brookes insists that he did. "Galton completely misread his results on regression," he argues, and wrongly believed that human heights tended "to become more average with each generation." Even worse, Brookes claims, Galton's muddleheadedness about regression led him to reject the Darwinian view of evolution, and to adopt a more extreme and unsavory version of eugenics. Suppose regression really did act as a sort of gravity, always pulling individuals back toward the average. Then it would seem to follow that evolution could not take place through a gradual series of small changes, as Darwin envisaged. It would require large, discontinuous changes that are somehow immune from regression to the mean. Such leaps, Galton thought, would result in the appearance of strikingly novel organisms, or "sports of nature," that would shift the entire bell curve of ability. And if eugenics was to have any chance of success, it would have to work the same way as evolution. In other words, these sports of nature would have to be enlisted to create a new breed. Only then could regression be overcome and progress be made.

In telling this story, Brookes makes his subject out to be more confused than he actually was. It took Galton nearly two decades to work out the subtleties of regression, an achievement that, according to Stephen M. Stigler, a statistician at the University of Chicago, "should rank with the greatest individual events in the history of science—at a level with William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood and with Isaac Newton's of the separation of light." By 1889, when Galton published his most influential book, "Natural Inheritance," his grasp of it was nearly complete. He knew that regression had nothing special to do with life or heredity. He knew that it was independent of the passage of time. Regression to the mean held even between brothers, he observed; exceptionally tall men tend to have brothers who are somewhat less tall. In fact, as Galton was able to show by a neat geometric argument, regression is a matter of pure mathematics, not an empirical force. Lest there be any doubt, he disguised the case of hereditary height as a problem in mechanics and sent it to a mathematician at Cambridge, who, to Galton's delight, confirmed his finding.

Even as he laid the foundations for the statistical study of human heredity, Galton continued to pursue many other intellectual interests, some important, some merely eccentric. He invented a pair of submarine spectacles that permitted him to read while submerged in his bath, and stirred up controversy by using statistics to investigate the efficacy of prayer. (Petitions to God, he concluded, were powerless to protect people from sickness.) Prompted by a near-approach of the planet Mars to Earth, he devised a celestial signalling system to permit communication with Martians. More usefully, he put the nascent practice of fingerprinting on a rigorous basis by classifying patterns and proving that no two fingerprints were exactly the same—a great step forward for Victorian police work.

Galton remained restlessly active through the turn of the century. In 1900, eugenics received a big boost in prestige when Gregor Mendel's work on heredity in peas came to light. Suddenly, hereditary determinism was the scientific fashion. Although Galton was now plagued by deafness and asthma (which he treated by smoking hashish), he gave a major address on eugenics in 1904. "What nature does blindly, slowly, and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly," he declared. An international eugenics movement was springing up, and Galton was hailed as its hero. In 1909, he was honored with a knighthood. Two years later, at the age of eighty-eight, he died.

In his long career, Galton didn't come close to proving the central axiom of eugenics: that, when it comes to talent and virtue, nature dominates nurture. Yet he never doubted its truth, and many scientists came to share his conviction. Darwin himself, in "The Descent of Man," wrote, "We now know, through the admirable labours of Mr. Galton, that genius . . . tends to be inherited." Given this axiom, there are two ways of putting eugenics into practice: "positive" eugenics, which means getting superior people to breed more; and "negative" eugenics, which means getting inferior ones to breed less. For the most part, Galton was a positive eugenicist. He stressed the importance of early marriage and high fertility among the genetic élite, fantasizing about lavish state-funded weddings in Westminster Abbey with the Queen giving away the bride as an incentive. Always hostile to religion, he railed against the Catholic Church for imposing celibacy on some of its most gifted representatives over the centuries. He hoped that spreading the insights of eugenics would make the gifted aware of their responsibility to procreate for the good of the human race. But Galton did not believe that eugenics could be entirely an affair of moral suasion. Worried by evidence that the poor in industrial Britain were breeding disproportionately, he urged that charity be redirected from them and toward the "desirables." To prevent "the free propagation of the stock of those who are seriously afflicted by lunacy, feeble-mindedness, habitual criminality, and pauperism," he urged "stern compulsion," which might take the form of marriage restrictions or even sterilization.

Galton's proposals were benign compared with those of famous contemporaries who rallied to his cause. H. G. Wells, for instance, declared, "It is in the sterilisation of failures, and not in the selection of successes for breeding, that the possibility of an improvement of the human stock lies." Although Galton was a conservative, his creed caught on with progressive figures like Harold Laski, John Maynard Keynes, George Bernard Shaw, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. In the United States, New York disciples founded the Galton Society, which met regularly at the American Museum of Natural History, and popularizers helped the rest of the country become eugenics-minded. "How long are we Americans to be so careful for the pedigree of our pigs and chickens and cattle—and then leave the *ancestry of our children* to chance or to 'blind' sentiment?" asked a placard at an exposition in Philadelphia. Four years before Galton's death, the Indiana legislature passed the first state sterilization law, "to prevent the procreation of confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles, and rapists." Most of the other states soon followed. In all, there were some sixty thousand court-ordered sterilizations of Americans who were judged to be eugenically unfit.

It was in Germany that eugenics took its most horrific form. Galton's creed had aimed at the uplift of humanity as a whole; although he shared the prejudices that were common in the Victorian era, the concept of race did not play much of a role in his theorizing. German eugenics, by contrast, quickly morphed into *Rassenhygiene*—race hygiene. Under Hitler, nearly four hundred thousand people with putatively hereditary conditions like feeblemindedness, alcoholism, and schizophrenia were forcibly sterilized. In time, many were simply murdered.

The Nazi experiment provoked a revulsion against eugenics that effectively ended the movement. Geneticists dismissed eugenics as a pseudoscience, both for its exaggeration of the extent to which intelligence and personality were fixed by heredity and for its naïveté about the complex and mysterious ways in which many genes could interact to determine human traits. In 1966, the British geneticist Lionel Penrose observed that "our knowledge of human genes and their action is still so slight that it is presumptuous and foolish to lay down positive principles for human breeding."

Since then, science has learned much more about the human genome, and advances in biotechnology have granted us a say in the genetic makeup of our offspring. Prenatal testing, for example, can warn parents that their unborn child has a genetic condition like Down syndrome or Tay-Sachs disease, presenting them with the agonizing option of aborting it. The technique of "embryo selection" affords still greater control. Several embryos are created in vitro from the sperm and the eggs of the parents; these embryos are genetically tested, and the one with the best characteristics is implanted in the mother's womb. Both of these techniques can be subsumed under "negative" eugenics, since the genes screened against are those associated with diseases or, potentially, with other conditions that the parents might regard as undesirable, such as low I.Q., obesity, same-sex preference, or baldness.

There is a more radical eugenic possibility on the horizon, one beyond anything Galton envisaged. It would involve shaping the heredity of our descendants by tinkering directly with the genetic material in the cells from which they germinate. This technique, called "germline therapy," has already been used with several species of mammals, and its proponents argue that it is only a matter of time before human beings can avail themselves of it. The usual justification for germline therapy is its potential for eliminating genetic disorders and diseases. Yet it also has the potential to be used for "enhancement." If, for example, researchers identified genes linked with intelligence or athletic ability, germline therapy could give parents the option of souping up their children in these respects.

Galtonian eugenics was wrong because it was based on faulty science and carried out by coercion. But Galton's goal, to breed the barbarism out of humanity, was not immoral. The new eugenics, by contrast, is based on a relatively sound (if still largely incomplete) science, and is not coercive; decisions about the genetic endowment of children would be left up to their parents. It is the goal of the new eugenics that is morally cloudy. If its technologies are used to shape the genetic endowment of children according to the desires—and financial means—of their parents, the outcome could be a "GenRich" class of people who are smarter, healthier, and handsomer than the underclass of "Naturals." The ideal of individual enhancement, rather than species uplift, is in stark contrast to the Galtonian vision.

"The improvement of our stock seems to me one of the highest objects that we can reasonably attempt," Galton declared in his 1904 address on the aims of eugenics. "We are ignorant of the ultimate destinies of humanity, but feel perfectly sure that it is as noble a work to raise its level . . . as it would be disgraceful to abase it." Martin Brookes may be right to dismiss this as a "blathering sermon," but it possesses a certain rectitude when set beside the new eugenicists' talk of a "posthuman" future of designer babies. Galton, at least, had the excuse of historical innocence. ♦

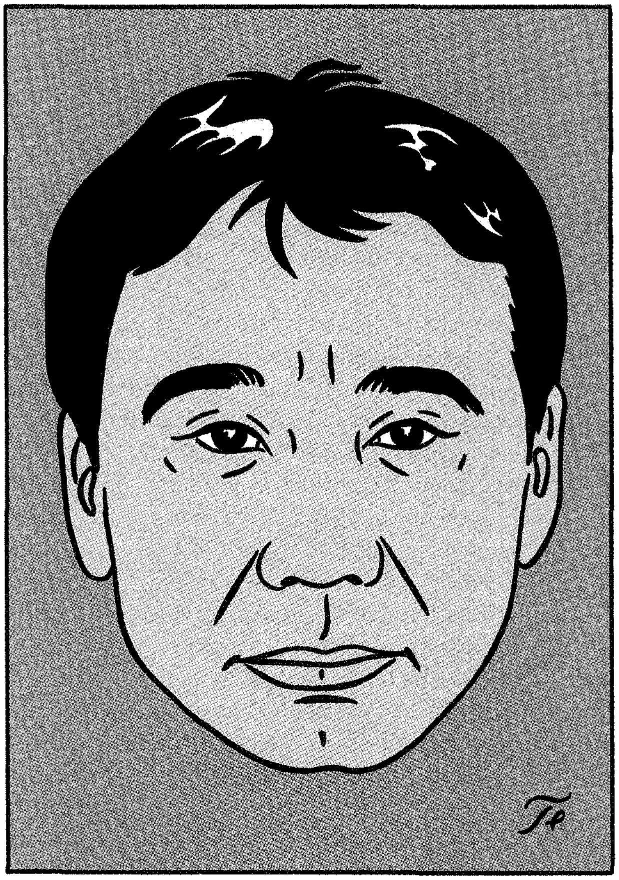
BOOKS

SUBCONSCIOUS TUNNELS

Haruki Murakami's dreamlike new novel.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Haruki Murakami's new novel, "Kafka on the Shore" (translated, from the Japanese, by Philip Gabriel; Knopf; $25.95), is a real page-turner, as well as an insistently metaphysical mind-bender. Spun out to four hundred and thirty-six pages, it seems more gripping than it has a right to be and less moving, perhaps, than the author wanted it to be. Murakami, born in 1949, ran a Tokyo jazz club before he became a published writer, with the novel "Hear the Wind Sing," in 1979. Though his work abounds with references to contemporary American culture, especially its popular music, and though he details the banal quotidian with an amiable flatness reminiscent of Western youth and minimalist fiction in the hungover nineteen-seventies, his narratives are dreamlike, closer to the viscid surrealism of Kobo Abe than to the superheated but generally solid realism of Mishima and Tanizaki. We often cannot imagine, while reading "Kafka on the Shore," what will come next, and our suspicion—reinforced by Murakami's comments in interviews, such as the one in last summer's *Paris Review*—is that the author did not always know, either.



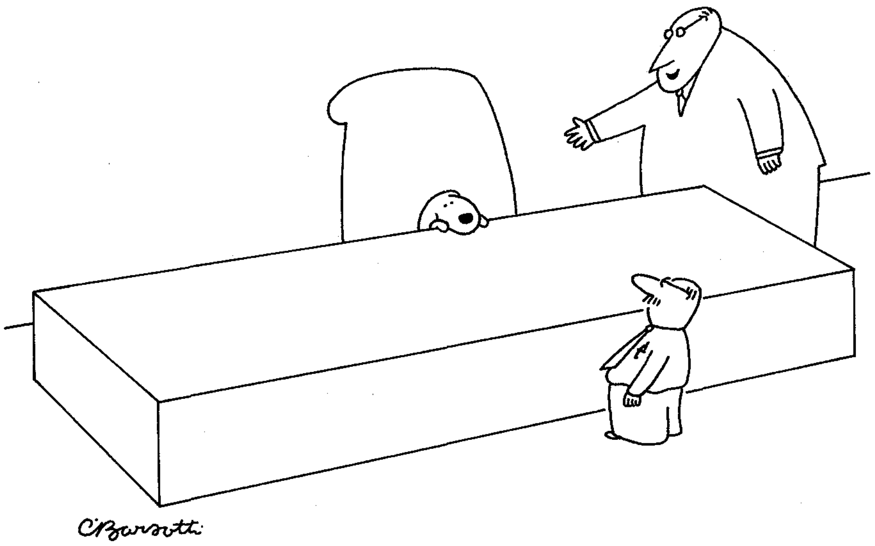
Murakami delights in violence, comedy, sex, and metaphors.

FLOCH

Yet "Kafka on the Shore" has a schematic rigor in its execution. Alternate chapters relate the stories of two disparate but slowly converging heroes. The odd-numbered chapters serve up the first-person narrative of a fifteen-year-old runaway from his affluent, motherless home in Tokyo; his father is a world-renowned sculptor, Koichi Tamura, and the son has given himself the peculiar first name Kafka. He totes a carefully packed backpack and, in his head, talking in boldface, a scolding, exhorting alter ego called Crow—which is what Kafka means, or close to it, in Czech. The even-numbered chapters trace, beginning with a flurry of official documents, the life of a mentally defective sexagenarian, Satoru Nakata. He was one of sixteen fourth graders who, in 1944, while on a mushroom-gathering walk with their teacher, fell into a coma after an unexplained flash of silver in the sky. Nakata was the only one who didn't wake up, unharmed, within a few hours; when he did wake up, several weeks later in a military hospital, he had lost his entire memory and, with it, the ability to read. He doesn't know what Japan is or even recognize his parents' faces. He is able, however, to learn to work in a shop producing handcrafted furniture, and when, upon the owner's death, the factory disbands he supplements his government subsidy with a modest-paying sideline in finding lost cats, since along with his disabilities he has gained the rare ability to converse with cats. (Cats frequently figure in Murakami's fiction, as delegates from another world; his jazz club was called Peter Cat.) One cat search leads Nakata to a house—that of the sculptor Koichi Tamura, in fact—where he is compelled to stab to death a malevolent apparition in the form of Johnnie Walker, from the whiskey label. Fleeing the bloody crime scene, Nakata hitches truck rides south to Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four major islands, where Kafka Tamura, as it happens, has recently arrived by bus.

Both the young man and the old, though independent and reclusive, have a knack of forming useful friendships. Kafka befriends Oshima, the androgynous, hemophiliac assistant at a small library where the boy can read all day and, eventually, bunk at night; Nakata in his winning simplicity finds a disciple in one of the truck drivers who give him a ride, the lower-class, hitherto unenlightened Hoshino, "with a ponytail, a pierced ear, and a Chunichi Dragons baseball team cap." The double plot unfolds in cunningly but tenuously linked chapters. There is violence, comedy, sex—deep, transcendental, anatomically correct sex, oral and otherwise—and a bewildering overflow of possible meanings.

In a prefatory chapter, Crow promises Kafka a "violent, metaphysical, symbolic storm," with "hot, red blood." He assures him, and the expectant reader, "Once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through. . . . But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in." At the center of this particular novelistic storm is the idea that our behavior in dreams can translate to live action; our dreams can be conduits back into waking reality. This notion, the learned Oshima tells Kafka, can be found in



"Go ahead, Albertson. Ask Toby for a raise. It'll be cute."

• •

"The Tale of Genji," the early-eleventh-century Japanese classic by Lady Murasaki. Oshima summarizes:

> "Lady Rokujo—she's one of Prince Genji's lovers—becomes so consumed with jealousy over Genji's main wife, Lady Aoi, that she turns into an evil spirit that possesses her. Night after night she attacks Lady Aoi in her bed until she finally kills her. . . . But the most interesting part of the story is that Lady Rokujo has no inkling that she'd become a living spirit. She'd have nightmares and wake up, only to discover that her long black hair smelled like smoke. Not having any idea what was going on, she was totally confused. In fact, this smoke came from the incense the priests lit as they prayed for Lady Aoi. Completely unaware of it, she'd been flying through space and passing down the tunnel of her subconscious into Aoi's bedroom."

Read in context, in the first section of Arthur Waley's translation of "Genji," the episode borders on the naturalistic. Within the tight, constrained circles of the imperial court, emotional violence bursts its bonds. Both women are gravely sickened by the trespassing spirit of one of them; Lady Rokujo, a beauty of great refinement, is horrified that her dreams about Princess Aoi are full of a "brutal fury such as in her waking life would have been utterly foreign to her." She reflects, "How terrible! It seemed then that it was really possible for one's spirit to leave the body and break out into emotions which the waking mind would not countenance."

From the inarguable truth of the second observation the possibility of one's spirit leaving one's body could be plausibly deduced in a prescientific, preëlectric age when, Oshima points out, "the physical darkness outside and the inner darkness of the soul were mixed together, with no boundary separating the two." In Murakami's vision of our materialist, garishly illuminated age, however, the boundary between inner and outer darkness is traversed by grotesque figments borrowed from the world of commercial imagery: Johnnie Walker, with boots and top hat, manifests himself to the cat-loving simpleton Nakata as a mass murderer of stray felines, jocularly cutting open their furry abdomens and popping their still-beating hearts into his mouth, and Colonel Sanders, in his white suit and string tie, appears to Nakata's companion, Hoshino, as a fast-talking pimp. The Colonel, questioned by the startled Hoshino about his nature, quotes another venerable text, Ueda Akinari's "Tales of Moonlight and Rain":

> *Shape I may take, converse I may, but neither god nor Buddha am I, rather an insensate being whose heart thus differs from that of man.*

Later, with some exasperation, the Colonel tells Hoshino, "I'm a *concept*, get it? *Con-cept!*" Concept or whatever, he is a very adroit fixer when it comes to such supernatural hustles as handling the entrance stone to the spirit world, where the dead and the drastically detached live in the heart of the forest like writers at the MacDowell Colony—meals and housekeeping provided and other residents discreetly out of sight.

This novel quotes Goethe as decreeing, "Everything's a metaphor." But a Western reader expects the metaphors, or symbolic realities, to be—as in "The Faerie Queene," "The Pilgrim's Progress," and Goethe's "Faust"—organized by certain polarities, in a magnetic field shaped by a central supernatural authority. No such authority controls the spooky carnival of "Kafka on the Shore." To quote Colonel Sanders once more:

> "Listen—God only exists in people's minds. Especially in Japan, God's always been kind of a flexible concept. Look at what happened after the war. Douglas MacArthur ordered the divine emperor to quit being God, and he did, making a speech saying he was just an ordinary person."

In "Kafka on the Shore," the skies unaccountably produce showers of sardines, mackerel, and leeches, and some unlucky people get stuck halfway in the spirit world and hence cast a faint shadow in this one. Japanese supernature, imported into contemporary America with animated cartoons, video games, and Yu-Gi-Oh cards, is luxuriant, lighthearted, and, by the standards of monotheism, undisciplined. The religious history of Japan since the introduction of Chinese culture in the fifth century A.D. and the arrival of Buddhism in the sixth has been a long lesson in the stubborn resilience and adaptability of the native cult of polytheistic nature worship called, to distinguish it from Buddhism, Shinto. Shinto, to quote the Encyclopædia Britannica, "has no founder, no official sacred scriptures, in the strict sense, and no fixed dogma." Nor does it offer, as atypically surviving kamikaze pilots have proudly pointed out, an afterlife. It is based on *kami*, a ubiquitous word sometimes translated as "gods" or "spirits" but meaning, finally, anything felt worthy of reverence. One of Shinto's belated theorists, Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), defined *kami* as "anything whatsoever which was out of the ordinary."

A tenacious adherence to Shinto in the Japanese countryside and among the masses has enabled it to coexist for a millennium and a half with Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and to be subject to repeated revivals, most recently, from 1871 to 1945, as the official national religion and a powerful spiritual weapon in Japan's imperialist wars. After Japan's defeat in the Second World War, Shinto, under the direction of the Allied occupation force, was disestablished, its holidays were curtailed, and the emperor's divinity—based on the first emperor's purported descent from the sun goddess—was renounced. But Shinto shrines remain, in the imperial precincts and in the countryside; its rites are performed, its paper wish-slips tied to bushes, its amulets sold to tourists Asian and Western. Shinto's strong aesthetic component, a reverence toward materials and processes, continues to permeate the crafts and the arts. *Kami* exists not only in heavenly and earthly forces but in animals, birds, plants, and stones. Nakata and Hoshino spend hours trying to learn how to converse with a stone—to divine what the stone, at times easily lifted and at others heavy to the limits of a man's strength, wants. *Kami* pervades Murakami's world, in which, therefore, many Western readers will feel, a bit queasily, at sea, however many fragments of globalized Western culture—Goethe, Beethoven, Eichmann, Hegel, Coltrane, Schubert, Napoleon—bob from paragraph to paragraph.

The novel's two heroes interact only in the realm of *kami*. Of their entwined narratives, the story of Kafka Tamura is more problematic, more curiously overloaded, than that of the holy fool Nakata, with its familiar elements of science fiction, quest, and ebullient heroics. As Hoshino remarks, "This is starting to feel like an Indiana Jones movie or something." Return and release to the underworld of his childhood coma are the old man's intelligible goals, for which he prepares with prodigious sessions of sleep. Less intelligibly, the "cool, tall, fifteen-year-old boy lugging a backpack and a bunch of obsessions" labors under an ill-defined Oedipal curse. He hates his father enough to dream of killing him, and to feel little sorrow when he is killed, but we never see the father, unless it is in the bizarre guise of Johnnie Walker, and know only that he was a famous artist and, as such, probably pretty egocentric. Kafka's mother left home, with his older sister, when he was four years old, and when he encounters her in Shikoku it is in the form of a fifteen-year-old spirit projection of the library director, trim, prim, reserved Miss Saeki, who is over fifty. Miss Saeki and Kafka Tamura talk like this:

"We're not metaphors."

"I know," I say. "But metaphors help eliminate what separates you and me."

A faint smile comes to her as she looks up at me. "That's the oddest pickup line I've ever heard."

"There're a lot of odd things going on—but I feel like I'm slowly getting closer to the truth."

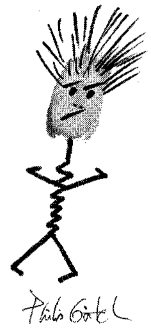
"Actually getting closer to a metaphorical truth? Or metaphorically getting closer to an actual truth? Or maybe they supplement each other?"

"Either way, I don't think I can stand the sadness I feel right now," I tell her.

"I feel the same way."

Small wonder, as the teen-ager admits, that "the whole confused mess swirls around in my brain, and my head feels like it's about to burst." The Oedipus myth, shedding its fatal Greek gravity and the universality Freud gave it, just adds vapor to the mist of fancy and strangeness through which the young hero moves toward the unexceptional goal of growing up.

In the last pages, the novel asks that it be taken as a happily ending saga of maturation, of "a brand-new world" for a purged Kafka. But beneath his feverish, symbolically fraught adventures there is a subconscious pull almost equal to the pull of sex and vital growth: that of nothingness, of emptiness, of blissful blankness. Murakami is a tender painter of negative spaces. After his coma, Nakata "returned to this world with his mind wiped clean. The proverbial blank slate." In his adulthood, "that bottomless world of darkness, that weighty silence and chaos, was an old friend, a part of him already." Throughout this chronicle, Murakami describes his characters falling asleep as lovingly as he itemizes what they cook and eat. Refrigerated severed cat heads, like the severed human heads of Tanizaki's tremendous novella "The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi," have a lulling serenity, "staring out blankly at a point in space." Making love to a woman, "you listen as the blank within her is filled." Kafka Tamura says, "There's a void inside me, a blank that is slowly expanding, devouring what's left of who I am. I can hear it happening." Heading into the forest, leaving all his backpacked defenses behind, he thinks triumphantly, "I head for the core of the labyrinth, giving myself up to the void." Existence as something half empty—a mere skin on the essential void, a transitory shore—needs, for its celebration, a Japanese spiritual tact. ♦



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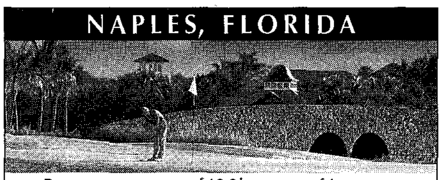

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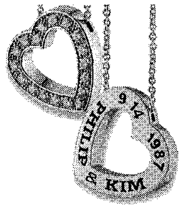

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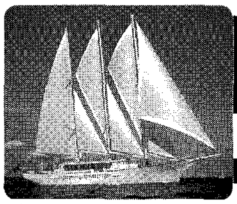

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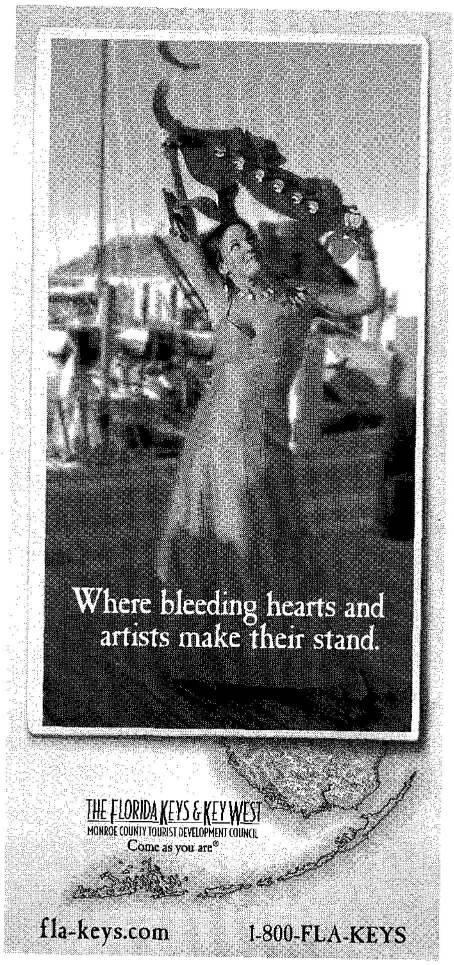
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THE ART WORLD

THAT EIGHTIES SHOW

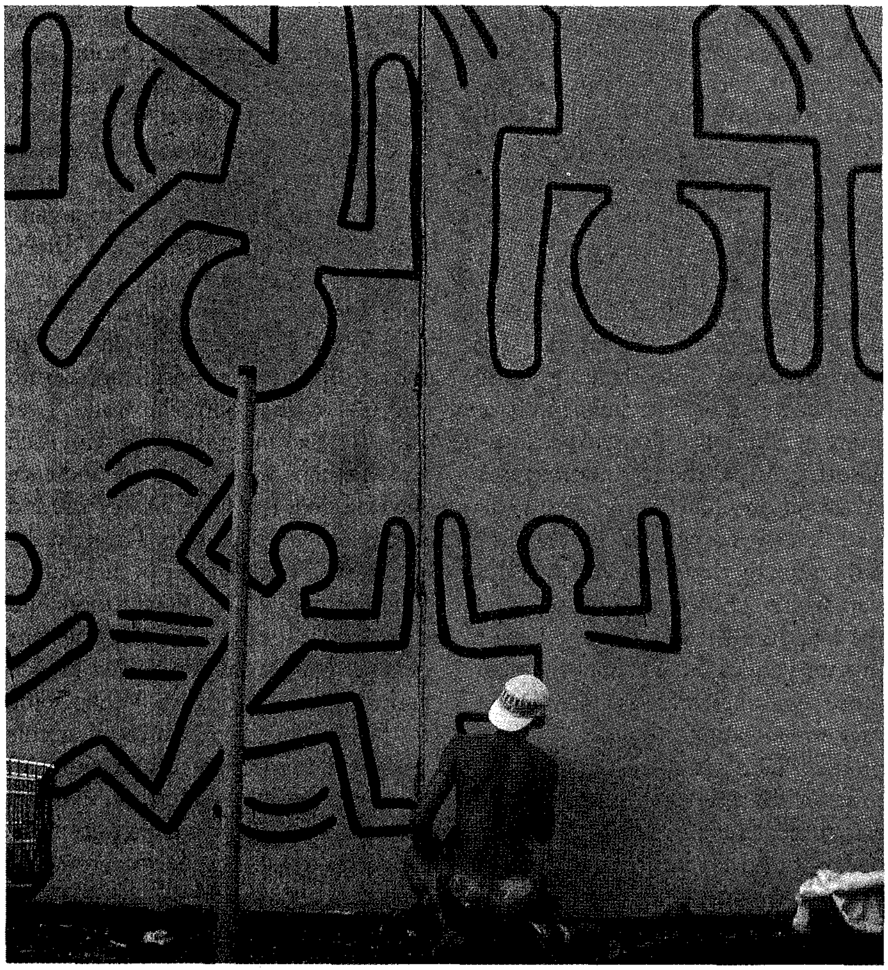
Revisiting the East Village.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"East Village USA," at the New Museum, explores a do-it-yourself art scene that took form suddenly in 1981 and flourished until its equally abrupt end, in 1987. Bold youths stormed an impoverished neighborhood that had been devastated, in the previous decade, by fire and crime. They promulgated nihilistic punk and nascent hip-hop, the rogue glamour of graffiti, haphazard variants of neo-expressionist painting, gamey performance art, drag-queen cheek, anarchist political deliriums, and bustling entrepreneurship. Limousines purring outside storefront galleries on grubby blocks symbolized a romance of the rich with the nether classes which gentrified the latter out of house and home, and betrayed their artistic progeny, as one season's cosseted graffiti master became the next's snubbed has-been. AIDS, fashion fatigue, real-estate speculation, and the lure of a booming SoHo for the more nimble dealers and artists, (who were fed up with tenements that afforded few spaces suitable for exhibiting or even making art) withered the scene's shallow roots. There was something toxically facetious about the East Village versions of avant-gardism and *la vie bohème* which heralded a shift to arch self-consciousness in American culture. (Writing in this show's catalogue, Liza Kirwin notes the nearly simultaneous débuts, in 1982, of a trailblazing gallery in the artist Gracie Mansion's bathroom and "Late Night with David Letterman.") But the half-cooked epoch was significant in ways that merit closer consideration than it has received.

The best art in the show, which manages to be both comprehensive and concise, tends to be the least reflective of the street-level East Village experience, with one exception. Nan Goldin's color photographs of determinedly broken youth—from her great, baggy suite "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency"—preserve the desperate, at times literally deathly, ardors of a generation that stayed up late to fit into each day its maximum quotient of mistakes. Her work's formal beauty and aching intimacy transformed a genre of kids-on-the-skids vérité that had previously been identified with grainy black-and-white and churlish defiance. (Think of Larry Clark's winsome, strung-out oafs.) In "The Hug" (1980), a bare, muscular, strangely disembodied male arm clasps a frizzy-haired girl in a thrift-shop blue dress. Her face is unseen, but she feels known: daughter, sister, confidante. Flash-lit, with inky shadows, in a corner of a white-walled apartment, the picture is a baroque icon, becoming classical as its period qualities recede in time. Thanks to Goldin, the East Village moment lingers as a fable of tear-stained vitality that, thwarted by limitations both personal and cultural, stupidly but somehow magnificently threw itself away in drugs, drink, violence, and spasmodic erotic splendor. A suggested title for a musical version that would be truer than the formulaic "Rent": "What I Undid for Love."

In general, what survives as estimable East Village art is somehow atypical of East Village art, whose echt keynote was punkish amateurism, and whose strongest mode was ephemeral performance. (Projected videos of Karen Finley, Ethyl Eichelberger, Ann Magnuson, and other galvanic spirits in action are informative, at times hilarious and even moving, tribulations.) Most of the paintings in the show are terrible, ranging from the truculent clutter of David Wojnarowicz, an inchoate *poète maudit*, to the hysterical giggles of Kenny Scharf, whose maladroit cartooning no longer surprises. Marginally better, because they are firmly styled, are a shadowy woman at a window on Times Square by Jane Dickson and a painterly pastiche of a pulp paperback cover by Walter Robinson; they channel raw melancholy and righteous wit in properly low-down veins. Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring are important special cases, alike in being middle-class sophisticates who mythologized themselves as wild-child graffitists and became international stars. (Both died young, Basquiat of an overdose and Haring of AIDS.) Haring functioned as a one-lad advertising firm for sex and fun; his forte was less art than graphic design. Basquiat was a superb artist who reinvigorated traditions of New York School painting. His talent often complicates the vampings of a dubious persona—petulant, soulful, semi-literate urban primitive—with a self-aware intelligence as unfathomable as that of a Miles Davis solo.



Keith Haring, a one-lad advertising firm for sex and fun, painting a wall in 1982.

MARTHA COOPER

The ghost of Andy Warhol, a demiurgic role model for the East Villagers, wafts through the show; his death, in 1987, no less than that year's stock-market crash, italicized the scene's collapse. Warhol had latched on to Basquiat as a career-freshening protégé and collaborator, and Warholian cunning informed the ultra-smart inventions of Neo-Geo, the milieu's one launched movement that attained exit velocity, preoccupying the wider art world for a couple of seasons. Jeff Koons, the magus of an aesthetic that transforms commodities into art, which is then presented as the ultimate commodity, was overqualified for the East Village on arrival. His stunning début at the gallery International with Monument, in 1985, included "Lifeboat," an inflatable raft, meticulously cast in bronze, that feels intent on sinking without delay to the center of the earth. (The next-best Neo-Geo artist, Peter Halley, made blocky, jarringly colored paintings whose geometric imagery evokes both microchips and prison cells; these have dated.) And Warhol's Factory-tested protocols of instant, perishable celebrity infused East Village performance and social styles. A happy discovery, for me, is a tape of "TV Party," a cable-access show hosted by Glenn O'Brien, whose mix of stoned talk and often terrific guest performances by musicians and oddball buskers fitfully evinces a Talking Heads-like perfect pitch in deriding pop culture and eating it, too.

The contemporary art world of the early eighties blew apart into four main fragments, of which the East Village was one. The others were a defensive establishment of older artists, a fashionable confederacy of neo-expressionists, and a gang of theory-mongering Duchampians. All surfed waves of new money. Eventually, even the fragments disintegrated, becoming the sluggish mishmash that has prevailed in art ever since. The East Village contributed the novelty of a New York avant-garde that forsook global perspectives to party locally. (As such, it was a franchise of similar slum Babylons in European cities.) It was directly opposed by a craze in academe for moralizing discourses—deconstructionist, Marxist, Freudian, feminist. Delectable tensions surfaced between these sensibilities. A leading exegete of theory on the scene, Craig Owens, hatched the keenest critique of East Village art, in one word: "Puerilism." (Why the slur's victims didn't promptly embrace it, on the model of "Fauvism," I don't know; maybe they lacked ready access to a dictionary.) Such starchy acuity from one who was himself young points to the split personality of a generation: part hell-bent on polymorphous perversity, part hankering for the majesty of erudite age.

For me, the single most shocking idea to emerge from the East Village is not recalled in this show. It was a proposal by Walter Robinson to create a lucrative market in a new species of folk art: the crudely lettered, pleading cardboard signs wielded by the homeless who then teemed the city's streets. The signs had everything: funky elegance, patent authenticity, social content, convenient scale, and reliable supply. I tried, and failed, to contemplate those tissues of misery as found art. The gesture of selling them seemed at once grossly ingenuous and vilely cynical, disgracing both art and the market. But suddenly the project (which went nowhere) strikes me as the supremely honest exposure of an anxiety that most of the artists in "East Village USA" squirm to deny or finesse: a double bind of élitism and populism. Drives to be at once aesthetically impeccable and socially justified generated alternating currents of bad art and bad faith, which only lordly money could be counted on to adjudicate. Some such quandary afflicts all ambitious art in American democracy. The East Village got drunk on it. *In vino veritas.* ♦

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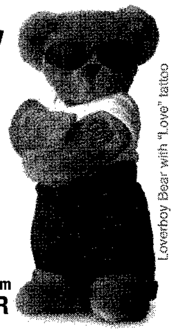

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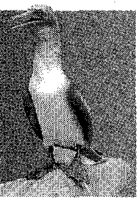

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THE THEATRE

MAD WOMEN

"K.I. from 'Crime' " and "Belize."

BY HILTON ALS

All is lost, all is lost. Poor Katerina Ivanovna has gone quite mad, singing and nattering on about her past. Maybe it's her grief. Her husband has just been killed—trampled by a horse-drawn carriage. Maybe it's her tuberculosis. It ravages the mind as cruelly as it ravages the body.

The words and music rush out of this sick woman like a terrible waking dream. Katerina is bullying her three young children into dancing alongside her for coins. She sings in broken French. She loves French because it is soft, genteel. She was married to an aristocrat once, an officer in the Russian Army—or perhaps that was her father. In any case, French is not Russian, which is Katerina's mother tongue, the language she has tried so hard to live in, here in St. Petersburg, where money and shelter are as elusive as privacy and salvation.

Katerina, a peripheral figure in Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment," enacts, through her very public breakdown, one of the novel's recurring themes: the loss of privacy. Characters are always rushing into one another's pitiful rooms to betray someone else's confidences, or themselves. Bodies become public spectacles, or property. Sonya, Katerina's eldest daughter, prostitutes herself in order to keep bread in the mouths of her mother and younger siblings, while she dreams of deliverance. She loses herself in religion. Katerina has no such refuge.

In "K.I. from 'Crime' " (at the Freight Entrance), the formidable Russian actress Oksana Mysina plays Katerina as the proudest woman imaginable. She is not asking for assistance but telling us what she needs. And we can't help but give her what her madness and her loneliness thrive on: our attention.

Staged in two small rooms—one steeped in shadows, the other blindingly white—the play, adapted from Dostoyevsky by the Lithuanian-born director Kama Ginkas and his son, Daniil Gink, who wrote the script, is essentially a monologue about desperation. Draped in a shapeless overcoat and wearing scuffed black shoes, Katerina bursts through a door into the dark room and fixes us with an urgent stare. She is shouting in Russian. (Much of the show is in Russian, which adds to the English speaker's sense of helplessness in the face of Katerina's misfortunes.) Into and out of the room she walks, over and over, slamming the door with each pass. Perhaps we are not the audience she expected. But we're all she has, and she more than makes do. Tenderly, she shows us a photograph of her father in uniform, and then slowly, more and more boldly, she begins to talk. She peppers her Russian with mangled French and rudimentary English. When some in the audience begin to recoil at this onslaught, this display of indignant and incomprehensible vitality, her eyes fill with tears. Why do people turn away, she seems to ask. Is it her poverty? Her illness?

Pride, in Mysina's interpretation, is all Katerina has. She clings to the faded glory of her tattered world. Fastening a red band around her arm—a reminder, perhaps, of her diseased state—she commands us, in English, to follow her into the white room, where there will be a dinner in honor of her husband. In Russia, she says, the dead are celebrated. But, sitting at the table, with a crust of bread and a half-empty bottle of vodka, she has nothing to offer us except her increasingly feverish speech, laced with insults. She badgers the three children into dancing again. She plays the violin, the bow unravelling in her hands, her blond hair spilling across her face in a web of loneliness. It's a searing performance, visceral, beyond language, the consummate expression of an unfathomable need. When Katerina's

Oksana Mysina as Katerina Ivanovna, a woman undone by illness, poverty, and grief. Photograph by Dudley Reed.

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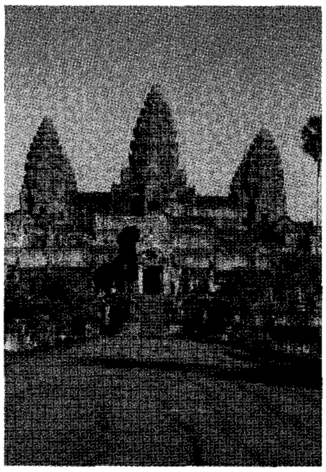

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death comes—Ginkas stages it as a kind of redemption—it is a relief. She disappears up a ladder to Heaven, to the unknown.

These days, now that politics is synonymous with distrust, and blue-state voters live in a state of cynical disbelief, one can sense a liberal audience's frayed forbearance whenever the lights come up on yet another well-meaning treatise on race, sex, or foreign policy. Theatre that is intended to provoke moral outrage all too frequently bores or irritates instead. That's because agitprop, at least as it has been imagined by contemporary playwrights working in the tradition of Brecht and Weill—Tim Robbins's anti-Bush production, "Embedded," and David Schwimmer's adaptation of Studs Terkel's "Race" come immediately to mind—tends to treat characters as something of an afterthought, wrapping them around an ideological conceit in a way that leaves little room for nuances of emotion and behavior. Sermonizing rarely makes great theatre.

Part of why "Belize" (at La Mama) is so frustrating to watch is the surfeit of talent onstage and the failure of the script, by Paul Zimet, who also directed, to take sufficient advantage. The play, set in the British-ruled Caribbean of the eighteenth century and inspired by the life of Edward Despard, an Irish colonel in the British Army, feels dry and instructive.

"Belize" opens melodramatically, with Despard's death by hanging, in 1803. A career officer who served admirably for nearly two decades (and a comrade of Horatio Nelson), he has been found guilty of treason. Among the charges levelled against him: joining the United Irishmen and threatening to take over the Tower of London. But Despard's execution turns out to be less climax than prologue. (In true bio-pic fashion, the action unfolds in reverse chronological order.) His real crime, it becomes clear, was marrying a mixed-race woman while on a tour of duty in Jamaica and, as the Crown's administrator in Belize, attempting to distribute parcels of land to freed slaves and the poor.

As conceived by Zimet, Despard is pure white-liberal consciousness. Happily, John Keating, who plays him, is able to give this righteous abstraction sensual form. Willowy, curly-haired, and wild-eyed, Keating embodies Despard's thwarted idealism. Still, once we hear the trapdoor on the gallows open, followed by the anguished offstage cry of Despard's wife, Catherine (played, with great ardor but too much Angela Bassett-like nobility, by Eisa Davis), we're no longer in a theatre but in a lecture hall, where there is an endless lesson in progress—on miscegenation, racism, and class. It's the theatrical version of C. L. R. James's "The Black Jacobins," but without its depth of insight or its morally complicated hero, Toussaint-Louverture.

Despard's tragedy is that he can't stop learning. Even his marriage to Catherine seems predicated less on love than on ideology, his growing sensitivity to the people of the Caribbean—and, perhaps, to his own outsider status, as a socialist-minded Irishman in service to a British king. A troupe of street singers in festive carnival attire (the vivid costumes are by Kiki Smith) charts Despard's Caribbean passage and his return to London, with the stalwart Catherine in tow. Here, the play's political ambitions take on the aspect of caricature. Despard goes to prison, and Zimet has Catherine present herself to well-connected aristocrats and at the House of Commons, pleading for her husband's release. Braving a gantlet of powdered wigs, sallow skin, and decadence, she is a black innocent surrounded by white grotesques: Lady Hamilton (Ellen Maddow, who also composed the music), Lord Nelson (the versatile Steven Rattazzi), and William and Catherine Blake as a pair of middle-aged, philosophy-spouting nudists (David Greenspan, as William, gives the show's best performance).

All we can do is wait for the next musical interlude. Blending joyful calypso rhythms with strident Brecht-Weill-like lyrics, by Zimet, the chorus gets us through the production. It shouldn't have to. As characters, Despard and Catherine are too emblematic to be interesting, but the inventive songs allow us to imagine what might have been. ♦

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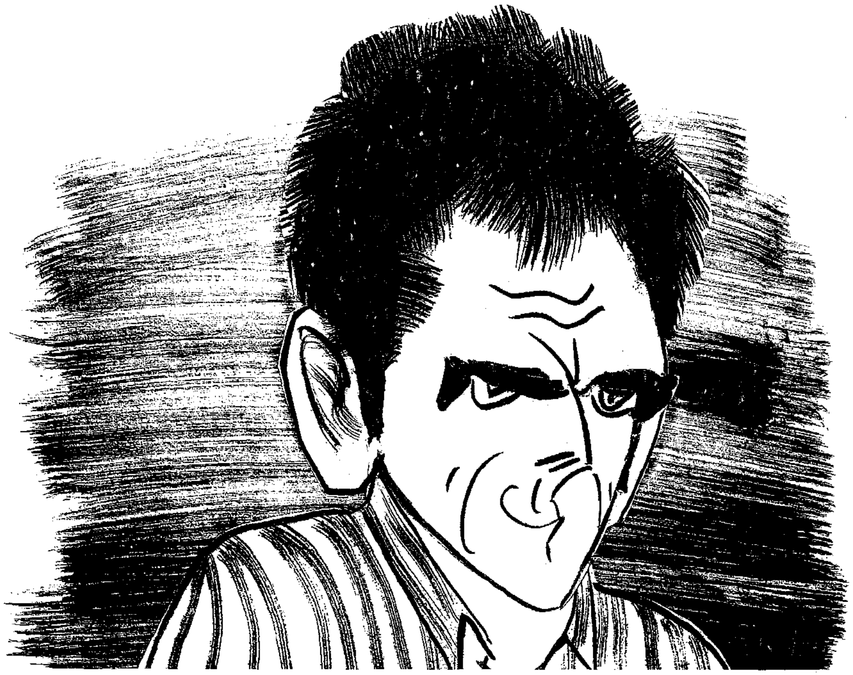
THE CONTENDER

Ben Stiller onscreen.

BY DAVID DENBY

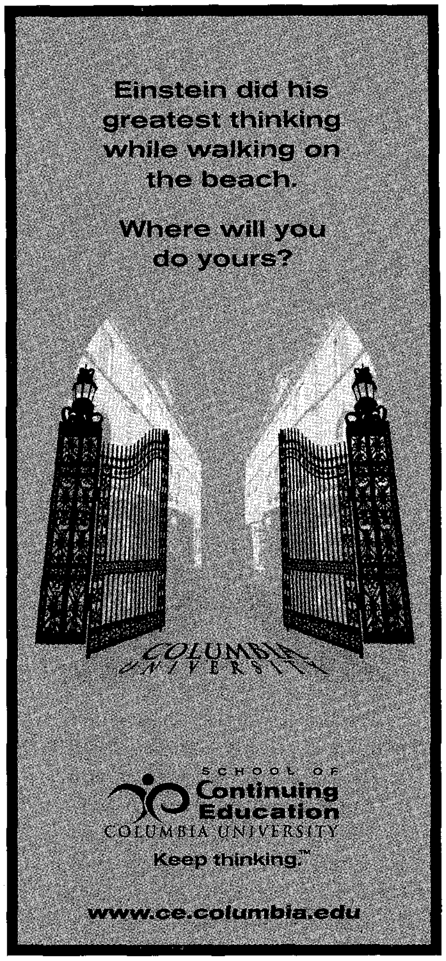
The tireless Ben Stiller is like a kid acting in a show at summer camp, cutting up for his relatives and friends. This boy-man wants the camera. Once he gets its attention, he hesitates and stumbles, playing out for us the eternal war between his ambitions and his good-guy restraints. In his male-ingénue roles (including the hapless Greg Focker in the current smash hit "Meet the Fockers," a sequel to "Meet the Parents"), lust and the danger of humiliation tangle him up. His eyes may suggest outrage, but his character is that of a sweet, caring, rather simple-natured fellow who, like some baffled knight, has to undergo the most awful trials as he pursues his goal—a tall, slender blonde. In "There's Something About Mary" (1998), his first chasing-the-blonde movie, he's so jittery he catches his genitals in a zipper, and, later in the picture, a little dog attacks his crotch. Robert De Niro keeps bursting in on Stiller and his girl in "Meet the Parents" as they are about to make love, and, in the sequel, it's only Stiller's parents, the older Fockers—Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand, as tanned love babies—who make out. Stiller has bulges he can't do anything with. He's a walking mass of libido, and frustration is his lot.

A contender in so many of his roles, Stiller is the latest, and crudest, version of the urban Jewish male on the make. (Richard Dreyfuss and Woody Allen, in vastly different ways, were earlier versions.) But there's anxiety in Stiller's acting as well as in his characters, and that may be the source of his puppyish overeagerness. Stiller is not a natural comic. He's not effortlessly funny, like Bill Murray, Richard Pryor, the young Eddie Murphy, or Jim Carrey; he's not an irrepressible, heartless clown, like the devil-eyed Jack Black, or enjoyably sleazy, like Owen Wilson, who, working frequently with Stiller, has developed a feckless stoner bewilderment that plays



There's anxiety in Stiller's acting that may be the source of his puppyish overeagerness.

TOM BACHTELL



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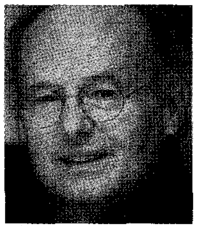

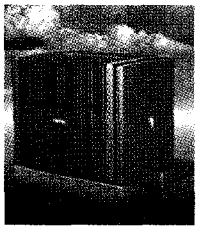

Franz Brueck

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off nicely against Stiller’s clenched overdrive. This man pushes harder than anyone else. You may resist so naked a demand, but you may also think, Why fight him? If he wants approval that much, let him have it. In any case, you don’t have much choice, since he’s in half of the new comedies—six movies last year alone—and in some dramatic films, too. (Since the late eighties, Stiller has appeared in more than thirty movies, directed three, and produced four.) In recent months, Web sites have begged him to take it easy, to take a break. But I wouldn’t count on it. Ben Stiller, amazingly, has become a major movie star. He’s never done much for me, but he makes a connection with millions of people, and actors with a string of hits rarely go off on retreats.

The son of the farceurs Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara, Stiller, now thirty-nine, started performing when he was a child—appearing on “The Mike Douglas Show” and then in a short-lived dramatic TV series starring his mother. After a year at U.C.L.A., he did a brief stint on “Saturday Night Live,” and then, in 1990, built his own variety show on MTV. He says he grew up watching “S.N.L.” and “SCTV,” and sketch humor is still one of his mainstays (he does a wicked Tom Cruise). In sketch humor, obviousness is not just a virtue, it’s a necessity—hit it right at the beginning, hit it hard and loud, repeat it, and then get off. But this sort of thing notoriously does not work in movies. Bill Murray and Steve Martin developed dissonant shadings and ironic and reflective moods that helped sustain full-length movie performances, but “S.N.L.” and “SCTV” graduates like Dan Aykroyd, Martin Short, and Eugene Levy, despite abundant talent and considerable opportunity, did not develop in that way, and their screen careers fizzled out. What accounts for Stiller’s enormous success? To put it mildly, he’s not a high-style or a reflective performer. But, in many of his movies, he’s a hetero swain, and that seems to have done it for him.

Granted, he’s an odd-looking suitor. His face seems constructed by someone playing with the separate eyes, noses, and mouths of a children’s mix-and-match book. There’s nothing wrong with the features, but they don’t quite go together. His forehead is high; his eyes sink into caves; his long jaw somehow breaks into a wide, sharklike grin. Stiller knows how to use his big head for broad comic effect: if he pulls down his chin and stares, he looks like a mildly paranoid gibbon, and by furrowing his brow and twisting his mouth he can do a dozen variations on dopey suspiciousness, manic glee, or pawing-the-dirt sexual rage. In roles where he drops the anxious-Jewish-male persona, these contortions tend to take over. As the idiotically vain model Derek Zoolander, in “Zoolander” (2001), Stiller played most of the movie in snakeskin and lamé, with a fey pout reminiscent of Prince at his most libidinously moist. It was a great spoof—for a while. There was a lot of talk in the movie of Zoolander’s achieving a new “look,” but, for the audience, one glimpse of Stiller was enough to get the entire character. The performance never developed much past the opening pose and pout.

Stiller is short and strong—indeed, he was so muscled up as White Goodman, the narcisso-creep owner of a deluxe fitness center, in last year’s “Dodgeball,” that he was almost impossible to look at. The character has a droopy handlebar mustache, speaks in a guttural, doused-in-testosterone voice, and imagines himself a great wit. Again, the spoof was only briefly successful—Stiller’s eager willingness to make a fool of himself (his entire frame was engorged) limited the performance to a stunt. He was the star, but Vince Vaughn, playing a rival gym owner in his careless, don’t-catch-me-trying way, quietly pulled the movie away from him.

If Stiller has enjoyed commercial success with sketch humor in a way that Martin Short, a comic genius, has not, it may be because he’s willing to aim lower. As movies have been marketed more and more in recent years to teen-agers and young males, sophisticated romantic comedy has disappeared, and Stiller’s ascendancy can be seen as part of that loss. In a period of gross-out comedy, he’s a masochistic performer who is still willing, in his late thirties, to play the sap. He’s had some effective moments of mortification—notably the long dinner-table scene in “Meet the Parents,” in which he gets caught in a preposterous lie about milking a cat, and, using his hands to explain, slowly spins out a web of stranger and stranger absurdity. But most of the time he's scrambling and falling. The young audience that creates the opening-weekend blockbuster hits isn't going to object to a guy who spazzes out, or to a nutty TV-style spoof that goes nowhere. Many teenage boys are walking masses of libido, too, and Stiller is their man, while girls seem to find his candidate status charming or touching—for all the wild look of desire in his eyes, he's hardly a threat. For kids, the fumbling Jewish male may simply function as a universal, adaptable representative of their insecurity about their own lives.

The fact that Stiller is not a natural comic, or a conventionally good-looking actor, may actually work in his favor. The marketers' sell-to-everybody strategies have, in recent decades, produced a peculiar perversion of cultural democracy in which style, even a high degree of professional finesse, comes off as a kind of insult. Americans today can't abide even the suspicion that they're being outclassed, and Stiller doesn't outclass anyone. Such handsome smart guys as Alec Baldwin and George Clooney bring a touch of cynical awareness to everything they do; they aren't comics, of course, but it can't be a coincidence that Baldwin and Clooney haven't quite become stars. The intellectual bite they bring to their roles may make people uneasy.

Ben Stiller is no doubt aware of all this, and he may, on some level, want to break out of the box that his extraordinary success has put him in. After all, early in his career, as the director of "Reality Bites" (1994), he created a moody portrait of the various funks and insecurities of his generation, and his drives and fears achieved a perfect balance in "Flirting with Disaster," David O. Russell's hip satire from 1996. Stiller has, as well, a dark side, which has come out in his direction of the nagging, ineffective Jim Carrey comedy "The Cable Guy" (1996); in his performance as a sexual betrayer in the 1998 Neil LaBute atrocity "Your Friends & Neighbors"; and in "Permanent Midnight" (1998), in which he rather lamely took on the drug-haunted life of his friend the writer Jerry Stahl. Stiller doesn't have the intellectual heft to create "dark" movies, but, as he gets older, couldn't he use his edge to give us a romantic comedy that adults could watch with pleasure? And he should relax and stop glaring at the camera like a cornered animal. Dustin Hoffman played an uncomfortable young lover, sixties style, in "The Graduate," then kept growing as an actor. Now, in "Meet the Fockers," he's a joyous, dancing clown, completely at ease in his aging but superb flesh. For an actor about to hit forty, that's a spiritual victory worth imitating. ♦

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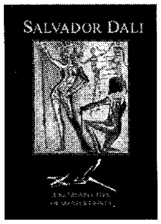

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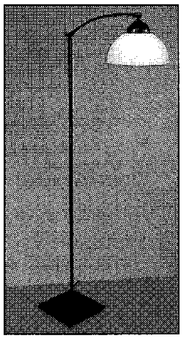

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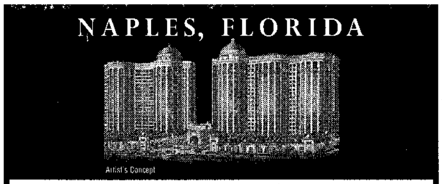

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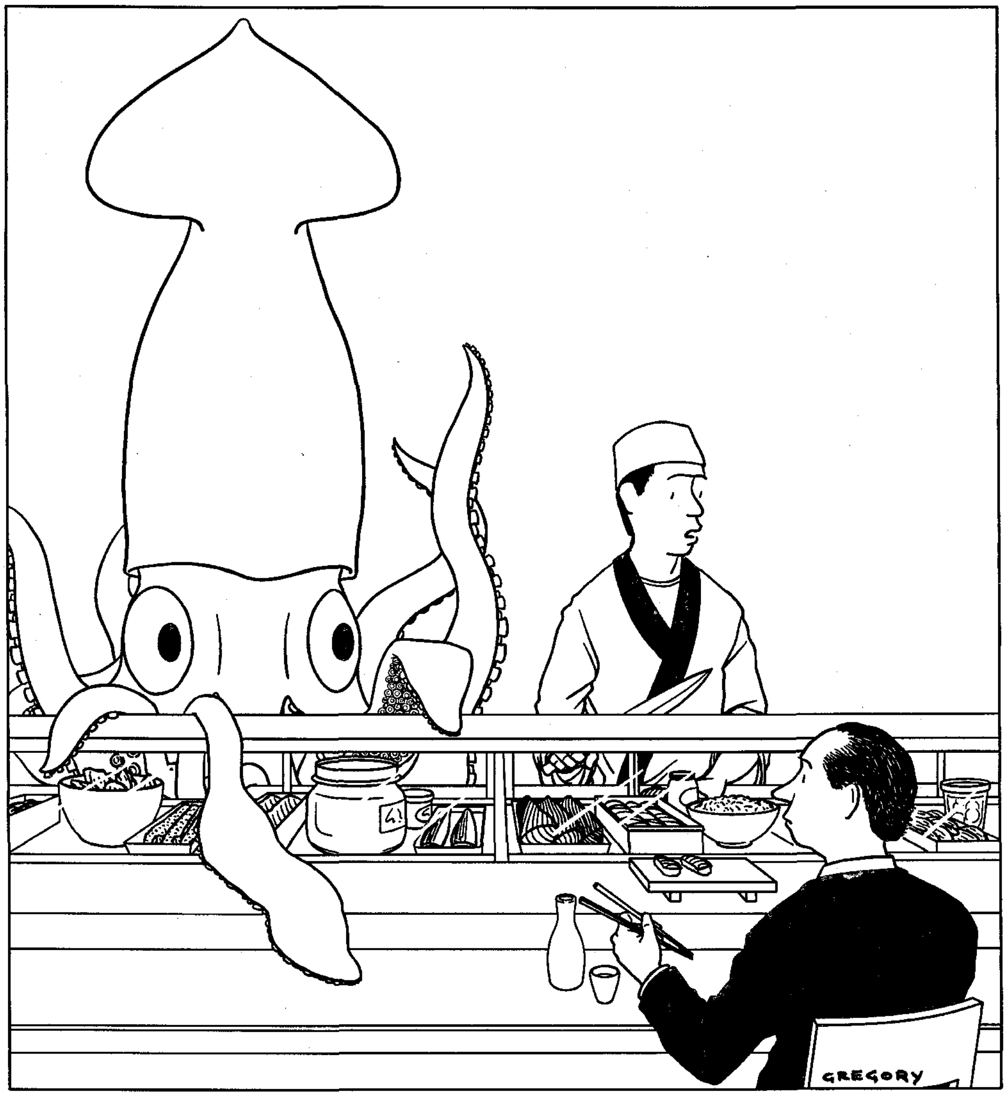
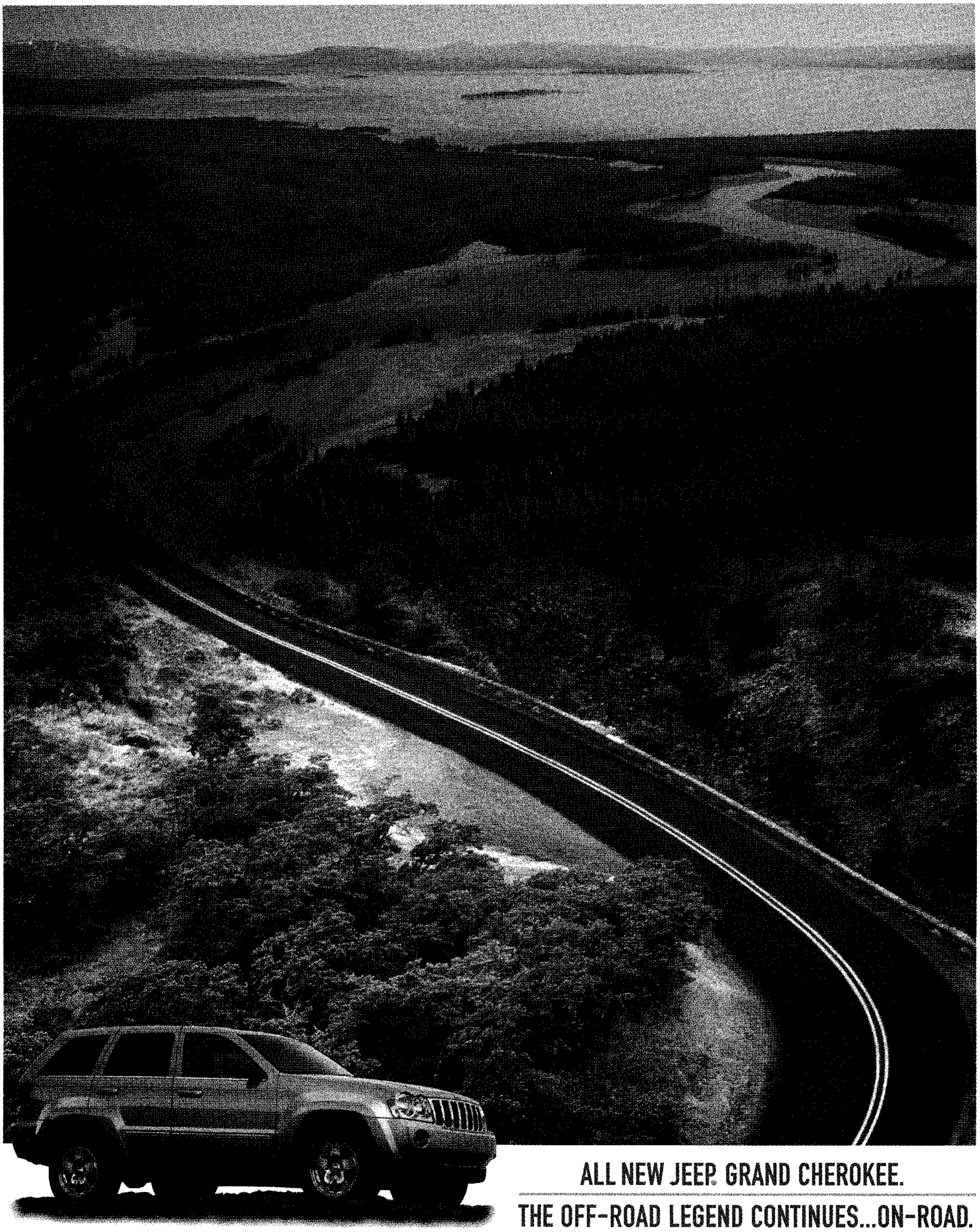


"He feels he can do more good working within the system."

For this year's Cartoon Caption Contest, Alex Gregory drew a man and a chef in a sushi restaurant—a fairly ordinary setup, except for the giant squid standing next to the chef. Evidently, people like to make squid jokes, because we received more than thirteen thousand entries, most of which followed four or five lines of comic thought. Hundreds of readers imagined the chef bragging about the sushi's freshness. Hundreds more wondered if the squid was yet another example of supersizing. Others wondered whether the squid was the boss's son (or son-in-law), whether he was hired as a result of corporate outsourcing (or promoted from within), or whether it might be a good idea to discourage the diner from ordering squid ("Ixnay on the idsquay"). And then there were the puns, which, like most puns, ranged from the execrable to the slightly less execrable: we got "squiddish" and "Call me fishmeal" and "squid pro quo" and "The Squid Stays in the Picture," the last of which we liked enough to award an honorable mention to its author, David Elenbaas, of Toronto. In the end, though, the captions that captured our interest were the ones that demonstrated an original comic sensibility. From those, we identified three runners-up and one winner. The runners-up, whose authors will receive their choice of nothing, are: "Elusive? He's here every night" (submitted by Dennis Christie, of New York); "Actually, he loves the job—it's the commute that drives him crazy" (submitted by Sarah Knight, of Atlanta); and "He opens the giant clams" (submitted by Alex Gregory, who was promptly disqualified). The winning caption was written by Dan Heath, of Boston, who is a research associate at Harvard Business School; a few others were similarly worded, but his phrasing was best. Heath's caption appears above, with Gregory's drawing.



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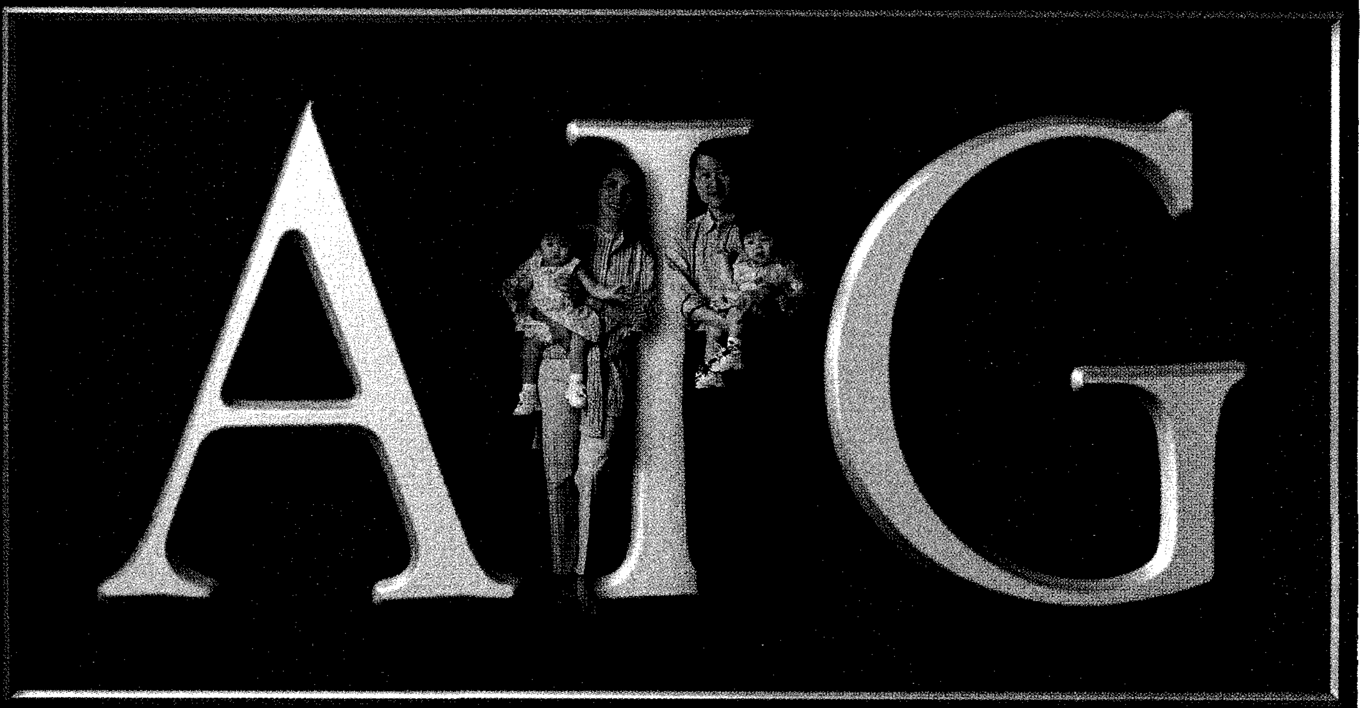

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